

IZOLDA

A
MAGYAR
ROMANCE

CAPT. J.W. FULLER

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To Mr. Spencer.

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IZOLDA

A MAGYAR ROMANCE



BY

CAPTAIN J. W. FULLER

THE

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PREFACE.

The greater number of those who peruse the following pages will doubtless suspect the author of no higher motive than to weave a pleasing tale, which would serve to while away a few leisure hours for the reader ; and perhaps success to a questionable extent in that regard is the utmost he has attained. But he has hopes that at least a few of the more thoughtfully inclined may here find food for reflection, and may, in the social and economic condition of the Hungarian peasantry of the sixteenth century, which he has attempted to portray, and in the disturbances such conditions gave rise to, find some points of similarity to the questions which agitate the public mind in the English speaking countries of the world, even now.

The political oligarchy with all its attendant evils and abuses, is fortunately no longer to be feared in this enlightened age ; though the death throes of the Boer system in South Africa, scarcely yet ceased, warn us that the gulf between the centuries of the past and the present is neither so great nor so fixed as we generally believe. But a financial oligarchy would prove just as hateful as the political. Yea, even more so, since political emancipation, with the educational, intellectual and religious liberty which follow in its train, renders man the more sensitive to

oppression of whatever nature. That there is in the English speaking world, at this dawning of the twentieth century, danger along this line, many will be found to affirm, and some—not a few—to declare that the evil is already established in our midst.

That any such outbreak of terrorism, amid blood, fire and fiendish horrors, as distracted Hungary during the Peasant uprising, were possible in our highly civilized communities, most of us would unhesitatingly deny. Yet must we not upon more mature reflection admit that on more than one occasion of recent date when organized labor, in its attempts to right real or fancied wrongs, has been brought into conflict with organized capital, overt acts have been committed by some firebrands, which have brought us unpleasantly near to flagrant anarchy: so close indeed that we have started back appalled and shuddering at the glimpse afforded us into the leering countenance of that hideous demon?

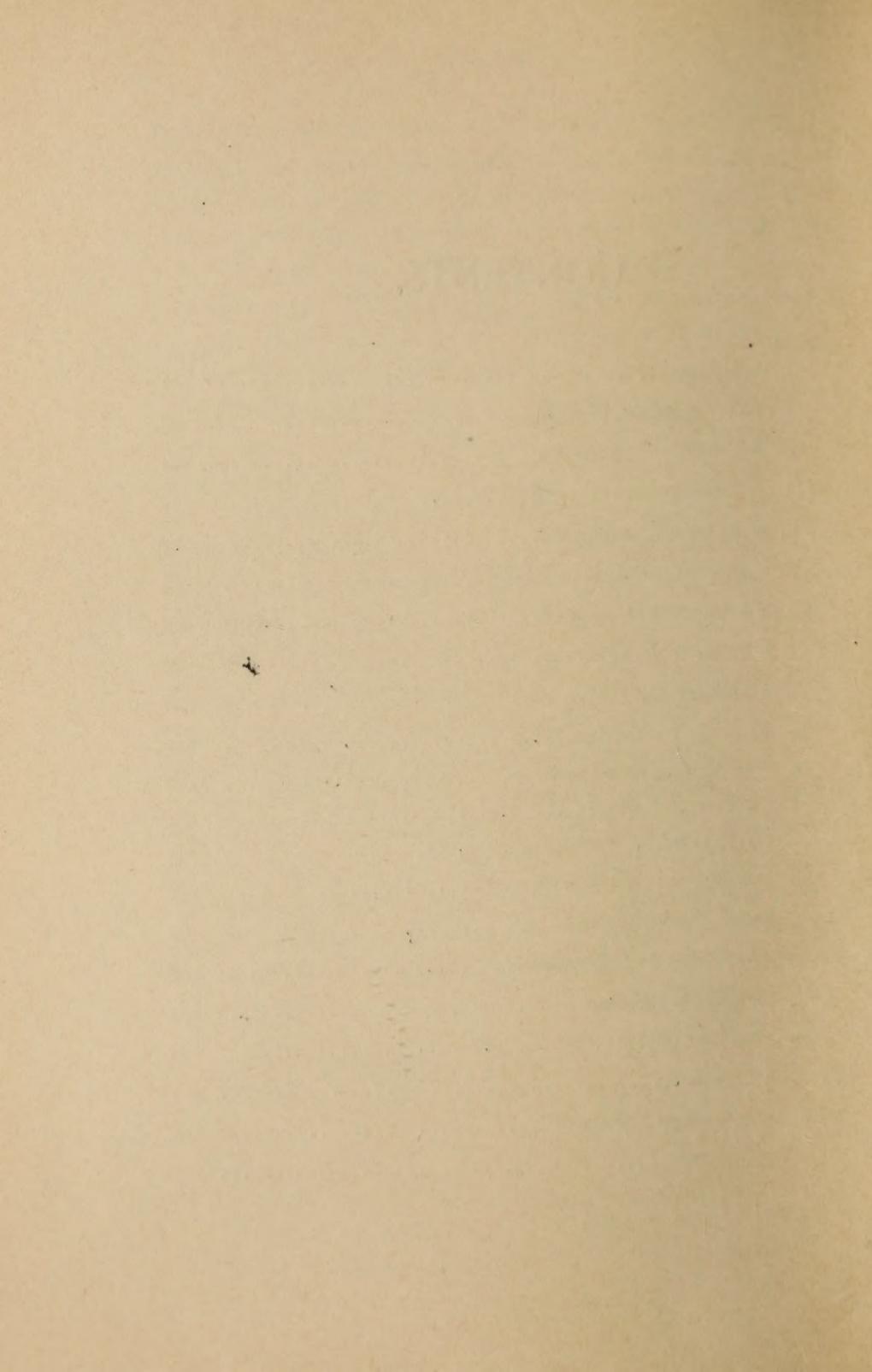
The writer, however, makes no claim of having discovered any panacea for such an evil: indeed, he doubts if any—other than as it rests upon a closer application of the Golden Rule by mankind in general,—can be found. He therefore refrains from moralizing, but leaves what he has written to the indulgence of his readers.

J. W. F.

London, Canada.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
Prologue	7
I. The Tzigana's Warning.....	28
II. A Terrible Experience.....	42
III. A Baffled Gallant.....	51
IV. Michael's Vain Appeal.....	63
V. Cardenio's Fair Defender.....	75
VI. An Opportune Arrival.....	82
VII. Chosen to Lead.....	90
VIII. Hatching the Plot.....	100
IX. Warring Counselors.....	112
X. The Momentous Decision.....	120
XI. An Heroic Failure.....	134
XII. A Fortunate Meeting.....	145
XIII. Forewarned and Forearmed.....	150
XIV. Jano's Fatal Banquet.....	157
XV. The Vayvode's Triumph.....	168
XVI. De Gaul's Revenge.....	179
XVII. The Pursuit.....	192
XVIII. A Quest.....	202
XIX. The "Tripartite Code".....	210
Epilogue.....	217



IZOLDA.

PROLOGUE.

I.

“Legends of Visegrád? Yes, truly, gracious lady and noble sir, they are many; but none is all so sad and yet so sweet as this, which I now make known to you.

“Far and away to the northward, as you doubtless know full well, the mighty Danube flows not southward as in this region, but straight eastward. There, where the grand and lofty pile of Esztergom raises its great dome, at one time dwelt Nickolas Gerhard. No simple tiller of the soil was he, but one of large estate; though then, as now, the nobles held all land and let it out on terms not lax to those of meaner birth, who to live must labor sore and return in taxes and other exactions the far larger part of all they reaped. But Nickolas had from the good prelate of Esztergom, upon the upper side of the great water, a goodly tract of many broad acres, which lay along the river even as far as Visegrád. This he let again in smaller parcels to the poorer peasant folk, and made fair profit from their labors,

while as the years went by he had become one of much influence and esteem among the people. Fortune favoring him, he so far escaped the exactions of the nobles as to lay by a goodly store of gold, and lived at ease.

"Yet had this favored peasant one great sorrow; for in early life, God was pleased to allow cruel disease to smite and lay cold in death his young wife, scarce three years after he had wedded her. He loved her well and was most loyal to her memory, therefore prized most highly her second self, his only child Izolda, who was but few months old when orphaned of her mother, but now had come to be a woman quite,—tall, dark, with glorious eyes and of wondrous grace. Not slow were many to woo and seek to win her, and 'twas even said that more than one son of some noble house had spoken her fair and in all honor sought her for his bride; but the queenly Izolda passed heart-whole by all until one summer, when with her father she had gone to dwell at the outskirts of the village, which was on the eastward side of the river and nigh to Visegrád. Here had Nickolas built him a dwelling, not large nor containing overmuch of luxury, but surrounded by a broad and pleasant garden, which sloped down to the water's edge and was filled with fruits and flowers in such profusion as made it like a fairy bower, and this right opposite to the royal castle.

"In those bright days—now seemingly passed and gone forever—the court was much at Visegrád, and the good king, Matthias Corvinus, had made it even

as the Garden of Eden come again in its magnificence. Oft as the fair Izolda paced the shore and gazed across the waters, did she hear the sounds of light revel and see the gay courtiers in their rich attire and on prancing steeds come and go, and withal seemingly as light-hearted and joyous as though no shadow of care or sorrow ever dared to intrude within the gates of that favored place ; and often as the cavalcades moved out did she gaze and try to catch a view of Corvinus—that mighty and strong king, whose praises were in the mouths of all men—but never did she seem to gain her desire. Sometimes, at night the myriads of lights, which shone and danced about the tall towers of that high citadel, and were reflected again in the dark waters far down at the foot of the steep hill upon which the castle raised its proud head, while sweet strains of music mellowed by the distance fell upon the ear, made it seem almost as if there indeed was perched some phantom abode, a garden in the clouds not meet for sinful man to enter in. For those were the days of our Hungary's pride, when the grandeur of the court of the wearer of St. Stephen's triple crown was the wonder and envy of all Christendom ; and many came from far for no greater purpose than to see if the stories told of greatness and splendor could indeed be true.

"As the wilful maid walked daily in the view of such scenes she grew to live in a world of her own creation, peopled by kings, knights, gay courtiers and grand-dames, and came to think almost, that she herself was some high princess ; and this made her still

more harsh to the many suitors, who continued to sue for her heart and hand. To her father also, who had ever been her slave, she was more imperious than wont, until the poor man wondered what ailed his child, and feared that she was ill.

"Of a sudden this all changed. One evening as she walked beside the water, just as the bright, red sun was hiding his broad face behind the heights of the Bakonyer Wald, even as it does at this moment, and steeping in mellow light the lovely plains, (all unnoticed, for the maid was lost in one of her bright dreams and gazing fixedly upon the highest tower of the rocky fortress, while pleasing phantoms chased each other across her mental vision) a single cavalier, quite unattended stepped lightly down the bank beneath the castle walls, and finding there a boat, entered and with firm strokes came quickly across the river and pushed his prow upon the shore, ere the maid was conscious of his coming. As he sprang lightly up the bank, however, she quickly recalled her gaze, and quite startled by his sudden appearance made as though she would flee; but he, doffing his cap with courtly grace, beseeched in soft tones that she tarry and fear not, since he was in truth a friend. Izolda was again her natural self—the coy and sweetly demure child of Nickolas—and answered simply to the questions put her by this stranger knight, as to the occupants of her father's villa, which it seemed he had marked from the farther side.

"The stranger seemed but simple knight, yet was he a man such as maidens love to look upon. Not

over middle height, but broad chested, strong armed, as one to whom to wield the sword and heavy battle-axe were but as child's play. A princely head, poised between his massive shoulders, with keen, flashing eyes which seemed to see into the inmost thoughts. An almost gentle voice which spoke in tones which soothed and made one feel as though he could listen always, even when it was raised in louder key and spoke in accents of mastery, with intent to bend men's minds to his, and brook of no dispute. The maid had now no wish to flee, but stayed and listened to his talk and herself answered—of what she scarcely knew—till he,—hearing some sound from Visegrád, the purport of which he seemed to know,—bade her farewell and stepping again into his boat returned as he had come,

"Another night as Izolda walked in the garden, he came again and tarried long time to talk with her, and soon he came again and still again, until she had come to feel him not a stranger, but one to whom she could talk freely; and as he seemed to know all things about whatsoever she chose to speak, she asked him many eager questions, but most oft about the life within those great walls around the frowning keep of Visegrád. He, answering well, told much of courtly scenes and noble jousts and knightly tournaments, himself the while finding deep pleasure in watching the eagerness with which she drank in all his words, and how the color mounted to her cheeks and brow, when he spoke of noble deeds of arms and skill as done within the lists before the king, when

some great feast and show was made to impress the mind of the ambassador of foreign state. So much was she entranced in listening to the things he had to tell in answer to her questions, that it never came to her to ask why he had first come across the stream, and come again; and soon she came to look for his coming as surely as the setting sun touched the far off hills with his fiery disc and bathed the peaceful land in ruddy glow—and seldom was it, all that summer long, that she had to look in vain.

"And so the days and weeks passed quickly by in great delight to Izolda. Each even the knight would have much to entertain her with, while he described the scene when the envoy of some mighty potentate was brought into the presence of king Matthias—(for the knight it seemed did hold some office which kept him much near the person of the sovereign, and knew all of any moment that happened in the castle, or indeed at any place within the realm); and when at times an evening came when the maiden's wistful looks across the wave passed unrewarded, he had explained when next they met that business for the king of much import had kept him away. It was at times a sight to see him laugh, as he described the startled looks and mute amazement of some of these lords, who had travelled much and visited strange lands and mighty princes, yet, when they came before our Hungary's king, the richness and the grandeur they saw there, surpassed all else which they had seen. One indeed (in reporting to his sovereign) had said that this Visegrád was in truth an earthly para-

dise. Once he described to her the mighty train, which was at dawn to set forth to bear communication from the king to the Court of Naples,—hundreds of prancing steeds, mounted by youthful knights, the flower of chivalry and of grace, with rich trappings and harnessings ablaze with precious stones, while their riders were clothed in rich and costly raiment as many colored as the rainbow; the splendor of the whole suite far outshone any such array since the days of the great Solomon. He was not soon tired of telling of all this pomp and grand display, and the maiden listening gloried in it too.

“‘And the King,’ quoth she, ‘Is he not a grand and goodly man, fair to the eye, one whom you love to look upon, yet tremble at his word? I think the great King Corvinus must be such, for many are the tales the peasants tell of his wondrous deeds, of his mighty strength with arms, and yet how that he is kind and filled with tenderness toward the weak and suffering ones.’

“‘In that I scarce can prompt you,’ laughingly retorts the knight. ‘I myself have found him much as other men: at times most fair and gentle, yet at others not so fair of word or deed, and as for looks, is to the eye much such another one as I.’

“At this the maiden was covered with confusion and blushed rosy red, for in her heart she was fain to think that, if her sovereign was even such another as this knight,—then was he perforce both great and noble, full of kingly grace and one most fair to look upon.

II.

"One eve, when the knight came not, the great castle appeared all one mass of light which blazed with steady glory all night long and only paled when the morning sun shone forth again. And all that day from early dawn, throngs of gay troopers, courtiers and fair ladies rode to and fro, while later in the day there came the blare of trumpets ringing loud across the water, and at one time toward even, a mighty shout went up which seemed to cleave the vault of heaven. All this and more Izolda saw and heard from her own bower in the garden. Her father had in truth told her (who knew so well already), of the noble tournay, which on that day was to be at Visegrád and to which the knights were gathering from throughout the land, also that some famous warriors were come from far countries: and he had wished for her to go with him to see this brave show, as were all the populace from near and far. But she, who at one time would gladly hurry to all such play, now the rather remained at home, knowing full well that when the even came, or in short space, she would hear of all from the lips of brave Sir Matthias (for he did bear the same good name as Hungary's king); and the hearing of any tale from those lips was now to her more pleasure than the seeing for herself.

"That night he came not near, but on the next the boatman, as was his wont, pushed off from 'neath the walls of Visegrád, and soon with Izolda paced the farther shore, while she listened to the full concern-

ing the brilliance and the richness of the spectacle : and her eyes flashed and her breath came quickly as she drank in his talk of the many brave deeds of arms, which had been done that day. To her questioning as to the cause of that great shout which still seemed ringing in her ears, the knight made answer that the king in person had chosen to meet within the lists a great warrior from North Germany, who had appeared invincible, and had proven himself the champion of the day, and the sound she had heard was the pean of triumph which had arisen from the vast throng of spectators when the giant was hurled headlong from his saddle by the prowess of their sovereign.

“ ‘But you yourself are wearied as though shaken in some onslaught,’ cried Izolda, unable to quite conceal the anxiety which she felt as she noticed that the knight moved more stiffly than was his wont.

“ ‘Oh ! ’tis nothing,’ he said jestingly, ‘I also had to have my jostle with the German’s bulk, and to-day can well remember it. The king himself, although he proved victorious, was not without a few bruises for his pains. But, it were well worth while to have jostled with a dozen Teuton foes, to see that look of pained concern in your sweet face, my Izolda.’ Here he paused a space, then added earnestly, scanning her flushed face most ardently the while :

“ ‘Now tell me, dear one ; does not my heart beat true when it tells me that she who is the fairest maid in all Hungary, does love unworthy me ? And does not your own heart tell you, sweet one, that ’twas for

love of you that I first did come across the Danube and have come hither almost nightly since?' The girl looked down in silence all trembling for a time, then raising up her head she faced him firmly and thus spake:

"Your heart tells you no falsehood, Sir Matthias, and I hold it no shame to tell you plainly that my heart doth beat in unison with yours. Were you to step into yon boat and row away in anger, the light would fade from out my life forever. But I must not forget my low estate and your exalted station. Wrong, wrong, have I been to meet you thus from eve to eve; but I paused not to think what way the stream was leading, for blind was I to all save the pleasure of the hour, and now must I take up the burden of my folly. Depart, Sir Knight. Choose some fair bride of thine own estate, and forget that Izolda Gerhard doth live."

"Not so, not so!" protested Sir Matthias with that commanding air of his which seemed ever to bring him the mastery in dispute. "It shall not be thus! I cannot have it so! Not so easily will I give you up!" and seizing her in his arms he covered her face with caresses, then adding:

"You are as fair and graceful as any of those of nobler line and could well perform with all stateliness the duties of a high estate. You shall not say me no."

"Sighing the maid made answer:

"It must be so; for I am nought but a simple peasant maid and such I must remain. The wild flower of the fields would not look well beside the

stately plants in lordly bower. There I would but droop and fade and fear ever that my lord was secretly ashamed of me, though always he might loyally speak me fair.'

"'No, no!' again the knight rejoined.

"'It must be,' firmly spake the maid.

"Much more in this same strain they argued, until at length Sir Matthias broke forth:

"'Well, let be as you will, and why not? Hear me now, sweet Izolda. If indeed you will not come to grace a different scene, will you not be my own "Love's bride" while still living on in this favored spot? I must in truth be much at Visegrád, but I will surely come each night across to keep my tryst with you. We will enrich this bower and make it even such a paradise on earth as is Visegrád, for I am not poor and can command all the joys that riches give. I will be true to you, and though I must oft be absent with the court at Buda and at other castles, yet will I always return to you, and we will make this spot sacred to our joys which shall continue on while life shall last. Here, too, shall our declining hours be spent, when the race of life is run, and as long as breath fails not; I swear I shall be true to you.'

"Not easily did the maid agree, but eve after eve did the knight with passion press his suit, until at length wearied with the argument and also feeling in her heart that if she forced her lover from her, she would likewise force the life from out her body, sweet Izolda gave consent, and henceforth the seemingly quiet stream of life flowed on serenely. As before

she looked each eve across the flood to see her lover coming in his boat, and her heart would sing within her as she marked him push out from the farther shore to keep his tryst with her—his ‘well-beloved’—his ‘heart’s true mate’—as he was wont to call her. And if perchance the gentle maiden in her quiet hours had aught of doubts as to the wisdom of this course, she quickly made the unwelcome thoughts to flee by calling up to her assistance, other thoughts more joyful, full of the goodness of her mate, the fervor of his love, his gallantry, his grace of carriage and the wondrous gentleness which he, so strong, yet seemed all naturally to adopt with her. Many hours also did she spend in the glad contemplation of the many precious gems and jewels of strange and cunning workmanship, which her lord, despite her protests, did press upon her. This or that rich stone had, he would tell her, been brought to the court by the Ambassador of the Turkish Sultan, the envoy of the French king or other great potentate. The king himself cared little for such baubles, save that they served his purpose in decking out his own ambassadors to some foreign court, and in this wise these had come into the hands of the knight Matthias, who stood high in favor with his sovereign.

“Those bright and blissful days moved on apace, and Izolda ever seemed to walk on air and tripped about as light of foot as the startled fawn, which flees affrighted from the hunter’s face. But all things end, and the joyous always more quickly than the sober days of life—at least it so doth seem. One

night when her lover came he was graver than was his wont, though he strove to laugh and sport with her and be as gay as ever while they walked and talked in close embrace about that little bower where shrub, plant and budding flower made the air redolent with their sweet perfume. She, with that quick sympathy which all women feel with those they love, soon knew that he was troubled, and in sudden dread cried out to know his trial. He smiled to note that all her thought seemed to be lest some great evil had befallen him, and hastened to quiet her fears. No real evil had arisen, yet had he that to tell which he fain would leave untold as he knew full well 'twould cause her grief. In short—the king had that very day decided that in three days' time the court must be removed to Buda; for though the monarch ever loved to linger at Visegrád, yet had he at this time stayed far beyond his wont, till all the gallants and the ladies were becoming weary for a change, and grumbled as openly as they dared at the prolonged dalliance of their liege. All save Sir Matthias, who was well content to linger and would indeed have it that the Royal court abide for all time in this, now to him, choicest spot in all the earth—for did it not hold that which in his eyes was the most priceless jewel of all God's universe? But go he must, for though he himself would be well content to sacrifice all future honors and distinctions that might come to him at court, for the privilege of remaining always in this their earthly paradise with his gentle Izolda, the king forbade and would in noways brook that he should absent himself

from his daily tasks, as one in closest companionship with his liege lord.

"The king," he said, "is of the mind that our fair Hungary hath need of my poor services, and therefore it behooves us not to rebel and hold our private joys as of greater import than our country's good."

"The maid was grieved at heart to hear of this, yet strove to show brave front before her lover; because, dear soul, she thought that did he see her grieved, 'twould cause him greater pain. So, though her heart sank as a stone within her and she felt a fear of she knew not what, to him she appeared to listen hopefully as he, in effort now to cheer them both, spoke of the shortness of the time they would be asunder, and how he knew that the court would surely move hither again quite early in the spring; for he would do his utmost to augment the sovereign's already strong desire to spend much time in sojourning at this his favorite castle.

"Three days pass quickly by, and so at length fair Izolda stood upon the brink of Danube wrapt in one last long embrace of her heart's love, ere he stepped into his skiff to leave her.

"Dear lover," did she say in parting, "for thy sweet sake have I striven to be joyful, and not over sad at this farewell; yet can I not o'ercome a feeling that this will after all prove our last embrace, and that when next you turn your prow in this direction you may seek in vain for your Izolda. It may be but a passing shadow, and I am foolish to burden you with it, my sweet one. Yet, if my fear come true, know

this that my heart is linked with bands of steel to this scene of all our joys, and if I be not here in the body to welcome thee, still will my spirit refuse to be torn away from Visegrád. So, heart's love, here will you find me on your return whether in life or seeming death, I know not.' And with these words ringing in his ears, Sir Matthias departed.

III.

"After joy cometh sorrow; though we oft deceive ourselves and would fain believe that 'tis the joy that follows sorrow. It matters little, for both we have, and though the joy may be fleeting, yet of the sorrow and to the full we shall all taste of a surety. So having had her joy, now Izolda had her sorrow; though why it should be called sorrow is perhaps not easy of understanding, since it was none, save that the joy was no longer hers. For thus do weak beings so oft torture themselves unreasonably—the sorrows of many are but the absence of joy, while other deluded folk find their joy in the mere absence of sorrow. It may be, perhaps, that they are joys or sorrows, just as we choose to make them. Be that as it may, the maiden soon commenced to droop and fade, and her father, the good Nickolas, became quite concerned; but to all his inquiries and efforts to rouse her she had little to reply, save that she was quite as usual and he need have no anxiety for her welfare. He, poor man, was forced to content himself with watching in silence, and doing that which

he conceived to be most pleasing to his child, and the most fitted to give her enjoyment; yet was it seldom that he was rewarded by seeing the old gleam of mischief in her eyes, or hearing the gay laughter filling the now quiet house. He would have left the place, but to all word of that she made such vigorous protest that he gave up the plan and spoke of it no more.

"And so the weary weeks and months passed slowly by, until one day Nickolas, returning from the village and speaking of what he had there seen and heard—as was his wont in striving to interest her whose life he himself lived but to gladden—said:

"'I found all astir and eager among the people to-day; for 'tis reported that King Corvinus does move his court hither to Visegrád ere long, and has sent his commands to hasten on the preparations for their housing.'

"The red flush mounted to the pale cheek of the fair maid at this, and she was quickly all attention.

"'Surely, 'tis much earlier than the king doth usually come, father?' she questioned; and he well pleased that she should at last show interest in aught that he spake of, gladly poured out all that he had heard.

"'Tis full a month earlier than the court came last year, and the people talk that its splendor will be far beyond what any former year hath seen. Already are many workmen at the castle in great haste to repair and alter to the king's pleasure, while many more are now on the way and are coming in almost

every hour. Some are cunning artificers that have been brought from different lands, who are to prove their skill in decorating and in devising new beauties to enhance the pleasures of the favorites of the sovereign.'

"The maiden now listened eagerly, and was each day ready to hear all that her father chose to tell: how wondrous changes were being made in the old castle in readiness for the gay revels so soon to waken their small world again. Soon came the day when the sovereign was expected, and Nickolas, encouraged by his daughter's show of interest, made bold to plead that she set out with him beyond the Danube, to see the gay cavalcade as it journeyed to the castle. To this Izolda gladly gave consent, and together they sped across the flood and finding good position, waited for the coming of the monarch and wearied not, though 'twas high noon before a great shout went up from the waiting throng, and many commenced to call down blessings upon their well-beloved King Corvinus; he who had made Hungary's name respected throughout the nations of the earth.

"Izolda gazed all eagerly at the gay company, which with nodding plumes, glittering apparel and shining arms rode slowly through the acclaiming populace. She, however, directed not a glance at the monarch, but the rather searched closely the faces of those who pressed about him, fondly hoping to catch an early smile from the monarch of her heart; but she looked and looked in vain, until at length her heart grew sad within her and she began to be

filled with grave forebodings of what might have befallen him since they had parted. At length, sick at heart, she was fain to confess, though all unwillingly, that he was not of that company, so turned her gaze, listlessly enough, upon the sovereign who now rode close beside her and whom never yet had she seen, though he was so much at Visegrád. Truly a brave picture did he make, this soldier king. Not over tall, but broad-shouldered and deep chested, with mighty arms that had long ere this served more than 'prenticeship in wielding heavy sword and battle-axe in Hungary's quarrels. The gay trappings of his prancing charger and the rich apparel of the rider made pleasing center to the sparkling cavalcade. This much Izolda marked and then, as her eyes sought his face and met the admiring glance which he at that moment bent upon her, she reeled in sudden weakness, and as the throng closed in, fell back as lifeless in her father's arms. In that moment she had felt her doom was sealed; for in that princely rider she had recognized her lover, and was filled with terror as she knew her 'heart's mate' was her *king*.

"All that long day and the next she lay as one in death, save that she breathed, though very faint, and Nickolas, stricken with grief watched beside her bed and strove by all the arts known to leech and nurse-wife to bring her back to life and understanding. At length she seemed to sink into an even slumber, and those who watched with him gave hope that she would waken conscious, whereon he withdrew, to

himself rest a while. In early evening he awoke and hurried to discover how fared it with his child, and was startled much to find that she had flown. Hither and thither he rushed in high distress, but finding her not he quickly sought the garden and the river brink where she was wont to saunter. There on the shore, with the water lapping about her feet he found her, and as he drew nigh saw that the glint of madness was in her eyes. Stretching forth her arms to where on high Visegrád raised its embattled heights, which the setting sun at that moment bathed in golden glory, she cried:

“ ‘Yes, my Matthias! Yes, my heart’s love! My more than King. I hear thy summons and I shall keep my troth. To Visegrád I come, I come, my King;’ and springing into the rolling waters, was quickly strangled by the rushing flood: and when they rescued that frail body, her spirit had long since fled.

IV.

“ ’Twas evening, when a light boat sped across the wave from Visegrád, and as it touched the shore a seemingly simple knight sprang forth and eagerly looked about to discover where his fair one had hidden herself. But all was still: so, when he had walked the garden through and through, calling gently the while, and still found none to greet him, he at last approached the house, round about which as he drew nigh he saw a concourse of the populace.

At this he paused irresolute, debating whether to advance or to retrace his steps to the river side and there await the coming of his dear one: but in that moment there stepped forth bearers, carrying a bier, and on that bier all clad in simple white, he marked the form and face of her who was his ‘Bride of love.’ At first he made to spring to the side of that cold form, then checked himself and sadly turned away and took him to his boat. There, as he stood upon the shore and gazed about disconsolately, the sun had just sunk beyond Bakonyer Wald’s high peaks, and with his parting beams broken into a thousand fragments, touched with rosy tints the greyness of the floating misty clouds, and as the knight still gazed, the glory spread throughout the vault of heaven; then as the planet sank further in the west, a cold greyness as of ashes commenced to steal across the scene, while a deeper gloom came on apace, and the light wind waxing stronger seemed to sigh and moan among the shrubs of the deserted garden.

“To the knight, as with bowed head he re-entered his boat and pulled away, it came home that the bright light of his heart’s happiness had also sunk to rest leaving him nothing but the ashes, though they were of roses.

“Next day a messenger from the king knocked at the door of the house of Nickolas, but found it closed and all departed—whither he could learn not, though report said that somewhere, away beyond the Transylvanian Alps, the grief-stricken and aged man had fled to hide his broken life; but no one knew, and al-

though the king made prompt and diligent quest, more could ne'er be learned of him. 'Twas rumored that the maid had left a day's old child; but if this were true, it also had her father taken away with him. Hearing of this the king made fresh effort to unearth the man, but though his messengers made promises of great rewards for any tidings, nought came of it, and that year the court was quickly moved from Visegrád: nor ever was the fortress so gay and bright again.

"And now the castle as you see is long in ruins. Yet to this day, 'tis said that here the spirit of the fair Izolda does keep her tryst, and as the belated swineherd passes on his homeward way, oft has he heard a moaning of such sadness as to move even a stony heart to tears. This, 'tis well known, can be nothing other than the wailings of that faithful maid, as she still waits the coming of her 'heart's mate.'

"Stories of Visegrád! Yea, verily are they many: but none like unto this true legend. Thanks, noble Sir. For a coin one fourth of this, I could reveal the future to you and this sweet lady in fashion which would much delight you. You will not? Well then, farewell; but forget not the tale of Visegrád." And the wandering gypsy turns away.

CHAPTER I.

THE TZIGANA'S WARNING.

A large open space with smoothly trampled earth forms a sort of courtyard to a low thatch-roofed farmhouse, on the outskirts of a quiet Hungarian village, with its one straggling street running in and out between irregular rows of whitewashed houses,—each a species of miniature castle with its high solid outer wall and heavy street gates, within which are to be found ridiculously small courtyards; which are, however, for the most part scrupulously clean and sometimes not without pretensions of painstaking horticulture. The warm summer's sun had just sunk to rest behind a spur of the Bakonyer Wald, far in the distance, causing the dark masses of the mountains to stand forth in bold relief and forming a picturesque background to the peaceful landscape spread out in the soft twilight, which is already beginning to steal across the scene as two young men stroll forth from the gates of the neighboring castle and wend their way in the direction of the village. Here and there may be seen a well laden wagon returning from the fields, and bringing in after the labors of the day a load of bright vivacious girls and youths; their dark eyes flashing and their well tanned

cheeks glowing while they sing in unison, songs to which the soft musical Magyar tongue lends an added charm. Truly a restful scene, and one that could be seen at hundreds of the different villages throughout the fertile Alföld, in those opening years of the sixteenth century.

As the young men approached the farmhouse courtyard, which appeared to answer the purpose of village trysting place, to which the younger folk were to be seen gathering rapidly, low, sweet and weird strains of music could be heard, which as they drew nearer, became louder and withal having a vigorous and inspiring note, seeming to impel to energetic motion the group of village youth and maidens, who were busily engaged in performing the "csárdas"—the national dance of the Magyar people. Louder and more impatient became the strains, which two swarthy looking men and a raven haired girl were drawing forth from species of rude guitars, and faster and faster flew the bare feet of the eager dancers, until at last from sheer exhaustion they were compelled to desist. All save one couple, who either from having entered the circle later than their comrades, or from greater power of endurance, were enabled to maintain the rhythmical and graceful motion for some time longer.

Noble specimens of the Hungarian peasant class were these two. The maiden, just budding into conscious womanhood with a face of more than average comeliness, of a clear though dark complexion deepened by exposure to the weather: the countenance

lit up by wondrously expressive eyes; a wealth of dark hair, carefully dressed, brought low over the broad forehead and tied behind, while ingeniously entwined in it were various bright colored specimens of the luxurious flora of that district. A high necked white linen dress with embroidered waist, short sleeves and short skirt completed her costume—the feet and ankles being bare. A well rounded figure, its symmetry enhanced by the graceful movements of the dance, arrested more than passing notice and caused the glance of the spectator to return again and again. The youth wore the usual wide linen trousers and short coat of the Magyar peasant class; his well-knit frame and open countenance also making a pleasing figure.

When the two young men drew near, the patter of the bare foot upon the smooth earth ceased and the handsome pair, with breasts heaving from their exertions, dropped back among their fellows, from whom an approving shout of "Eljen!"* arose. The music continued for a minute or two longer, at length dying out in a long weird wail. Respectful salutations were given to Michael, the son of the Comes, of Marot, and the tall dark stranger who accompanied him, as they joined the festive group.

"Do not interrupt the dance, I pray. We also would enjoy the pleasures of the *csárdas*," exclaimed the young Comes. "Come Izolda," he continued addressing the maiden, who still flushed from her exertions stood by; "will you not show to my comrade, Don Cardenio, the beauties of the measure?"

***Hurrah!**

"Truly will I," was the ready response, and as she was led forth she rested her hands lightly upon the shoulders of the young man, who in turn was instructed to place his upon her waist.

The music started up once more, and soon almost the whole assembly were engaged in performing the varied figures and vibrating motions of this fascinating and exhilarating dance, save a few of the elders from farm and village, who stood looking gravely on or chatted among themselves. Wilder and louder became the strain, while faster and faster pattered the many feet upon the smooth and hardened earth, as with heightened color and flashing eyes the Magyar youth seemed to throw their whole souls into the pleasure of the hour. When the revel was at its height, the music ceased with a loud crash and the musicians commenced to deliberately sling their instruments across their shoulders preparatory to taking their departure, without the slightest regard to the wishes of the dancers, and paying no heed to the pleadings of one or two of the younger ones, who rushed up and implored that they remain for just one more measure.

As the dancers perforce paused to rest, Cardenio turned his attention to the three musicians and marked their strange appearance with interest. The men were of slim, wiry frame, with swarthy complexions and moved with a somewhat indolent air, though in the pupils of their dark eyes there lurked a peculiar and sinister expression which hinted at lawlessness and cunning. The girl was possessed of

a certain type of beauty, with her raven hair and sloe-black eyes; but there was little attempt at personal adornment and her expression was on the whole inclined to be forbidding despite her comeliness.

"What manner of people are these?" questioned the young foreigner of his native companion.

"Why: know you not?" responded she, turning a surprised look upon him. "These are Tziganes of whom there are many hereabout. You must indeed be a stranger to our fair Hungary, if they be not known to you. They are far from strangers to us and at all times receive ready welcome from the Magyar people."

Cardenio's attention was divided between curious interest in the musicians and admiration of the village belle, as she spoke with ready ease, yet simply, her clear musical tones lending additional beauty to the soft Magyar tongue. Just then the gypsy girl made as though she would solicit something from the assembled youth: but one of the men motioned her back, and striding up to the young Comes, spoke but the one quick word "Sonkey" (Gold), in an almost menacing tone. Without parley Michael drew forth a coin and dropped it into his hands, remarking as he did so, that they seemed quite sparing of their music to-night since the daylight was scarcely waned. "Not so," was the reply; "We have yet many weary miles to go ere we reach our hut." And turning to Don Cardenio, he repeated that single word in a still more peremptory manner. The young stranger followed the example of his friend, making no

comment and the strange trio, deigning not one word or glance of farewell to any, turned abruptly away and were soon lost to view in the gathering gloom.

While the leader had been making his peremptory demand for money, however, the girl had unnoticed, sidled up to Izolda and with meaning look bent upon the young foreigner at her side, whispered in her ear, "Beware."

"Why! What mean you?" almost gasped the astonished maiden. But with an insolent laugh, the gypsy turned to join her companions as they took their departure. The young girl stood gazing after the strolling musicians for a moment or two, wondering as to the reason for this peculiar conduct, until recalled to herself by the voice of Don Cardenio, who was making elaborate adieux as he took his leave,—to which she in turn responded with maidenly modesty.

Michael Dobozy spent a few minutes longer in an attempt at converse with the older men, who stood about; but from the restraint manifested it was so evident that they were either not in the mood for talk, or else had other business in mind, and were anxious for him to be gone, that he soon turned away, and accompanied by his friend strode off in the direction of his father's castle.

As they passed out of hearing, the village swineherd—a man in the prime of life, tall and stalwart, but of no very pleasing countenance—raised his clenched hand and shook it after them, exclaiming to those about him.

"Ay, there they go, like all their kind, sleek and well-fattened upon the fruits of your toil and of mine, brothers!"

"Hold! Be more careful, Stephen," cautioned one of the older men; "it is not the part of wisdom to thus wantonly waste words; and beside, there are many worse lords of the land than the Comes Louis, while the young Michael has ever shown himself friendly above common, and does seem even anxious to help the peasantry. We have so few friends that it ill becomes us to speak lightly of such as we have."

"Seek not to trammel my speech, Matthias," hotly rejoined the younger man. "It is beyond my knowledge how you can contain yourself to speak so calmly of such a matter. The young Comes may indeed speak fairly and softly, but I say 'trust him not.' Of a certainty he hath some end of his own in view, and does but strive to gain our confidence, that he may have opportunity to spy upon us and learn what he can, in order to the more readily clap on some further tax, and squeeze us in the way that will yield the greater gain to his already overflowing coffers. 'Fair of face and false of heart,' was ever the way with these leeches, whose every thought is as to how they can drain more substance from the starving and toiling peasants, who are become little else but slaves. Here are we bound down to the soil, and compelled to labor the whole day to meet the exactions of these ravenous beasts—then what strength have we left to toil farther for provision for our families, or what desire either for that matter, since we have even

seen the bread, as it were, plucked from out our starving children's mouths, only to be wasted in riotous living? Why, of the herd I spend my days in watching, full three-fourths are already destined to meet the extortions of this same Comes you speak of as so generous. The day cannot come too soon for us to be delivered from these tyrants,—and I tell you, brothers," he added in a lower key, "the fixing of that day rests with ourselves."

Deep murmurs of approval greeted this outburst of the swineherd, proceeding mainly from the younger men, though more than one of the older heads might be seen to nod in approval. But this was soon silenced as Matthias rejoined.

"Come, Stephen. Have a care as to what you say. Even though these things be true as you say, yet are you making them no better by your vain complaints. Should your wild talk come to unfriendly ears, your condition and that of all of us would soon become far worse. You know full well that there are those, who try to better their own state by spying upon others and carrying idle reports to the nobles. I know of none such in our own village: but it is the course of a wise man to be careful and not let his tongue run his head into a noose."

These words had a sobering effect upon the group; but the passionate swineherd was too much excited to listen to cooler counsel, and once more commenced to harangue about the wrongs of the peasant class and to make all sorts of wild threats as to what would happen shortly did matters not mend. It was quite

evident that something unusual had happened to so unduly arouse this man, who though naturally of a ready tongue, yet seldom exercised it in that fashion. During the discussion the younger people, impatient of this graver talk, had by twos and threes scattered, until none save Gabriel (the youth who with Izolda had made such a pleasing picture), remained. He stood listening attentively to the excited swineherd, who, his passion at length rising to a climax, exclaimed:

"But ye are cowards! cowards, all! And like whipped curs, instead of standing for your rights like men, choose rather to crouch at the feet of your masters, and receive uncomplainingly any fresh wrong they care to heap upon you, while you fear to speak above a whisper lest some greater evil befall you at their hands. Yes. Cowards are ye all, say I, and all unworthy of the ancient Magyar race ye claim to be. Not so is Stephen the swineherd; for I will speak my thoughts, and what matter if some do carry it to the ears of the Comes and he visit me with his displeasure? Surely I can be no worse off than now. Slaves are we in all but name, and death itself can be no worse than such a life." And swinging himself away from his auditors, the angry man strode off toward his own poor cottage at the other end of the village.

The group quickly dispersed and as they separated, Gabriel turned to follow in the footsteps of the retreating swineherd, but more leisurely. Intent upon him own thoughts, he had almost run into some one

approaching from the opposite direction, when a voice startled him and looking up he saw his cousin Izolda, returning from having walked to the village with some of her girl companions.

"Where away to now, Gabriel? What can the matter be to-night? First I am almost trodden under foot by Stephen the swineherd, whom I met but now rushing along, muttering to himself and with no eye to see poor me, who had but time to step aside, while he passed like a summer's hurricane; and now I am about to be treated in the same fashion by you, who were but now so anxious to have me for a partner in the csárdas. What has happened to set you both by the ears so?"

"I scarce can tell," replied the youth hesitatingly. "To tell truth, I was minded to follow on to Stephen's hut and have some converse with him; but if he is still so beside himself, it can be of little use, therefore I will return with you."

"But what is it that has crossed the swineherd so; and why should you follow him?" persisted the girl.

"I know not. The visit of the young nobles to-night has nettled him, but there must have been other cause to rouse him so. He just now has been haranguing the villagers about the wrongs of the peasants and their oppression by the nobles: and as much of what he said sounds true and agrees well with many of my own thoughts of late, I was tempted to visit him to talk more about the matter. That perhaps were not too wise, since he seems a violent man, and if wrongs are to be righted, the

task surely needs to be undertaken by cool and cautious heads, rather than such firebrands as he."

"What thoughts are these you speak of, Gabriel?" inquired the maid, as they again reached the scene of the dancing and paused a few moments before entering the farmhouse. "You speak as solemnly as though some great evil had befallen, and—since you speak of it—I have noticed that you seem of late, not so joyous and light-hearted as of old. Tell me I pray you what it is all about."

"Would that I could tell you all my thoughts on this, Izolda. Of late as I have been out in the fields or watching the flock, being much alone, all sorts of new feelings and fancies have come to me, the kernel of which seems to be that I feel I am a *man* and as such, begin to question why I, with my father and so many others, should have to labor and till the soil, early and late, in the broiling sun or driving rain, for weary months, and then, when the fruit of our toil doth show itself, we must gather it in—not to enrich ourselves as the just recompense of our exertions, but for other men, (who seem to be no more *men* than we be) while we are left but enough only to keep soul and body together—and scarcely that at times. Surely God made not the world thus. He gave me a soul as well as life: and am not I then every whit as much a *man* as those two who a short hour since were with us here? Yet must we bow and humbly stand aside to wait their pleasure, as those of no consideration, while they do nothing but idle away the days and spend their nights in rioting and drink-

ing, spending that which we have worked to gather for them. Does it not seem wrong that they who work and toil should have so little, while they who do nothing receive much, and must needs waste and squander in order to diminish their abundance? Why is it that if I, perchance, am born in yonder castle, I am waited upon, wear fine clothing, am surfeited with the good things of life and am altogether treated as one much above the common herd: while if, as it did happen, I am born in my father's poor farmhouse, I am taught from infancy to labor and to know that there are those above me who expect my services, and I, for the privilege of living and of working so much of the soil, must surrender to these great ones nearly all that the soil can produce—keeping back for myself only the smallest portion, which small portion may be even more reduced, do I happen to till the soil over which one wields sway who is more greedy and avaricious than his fellows?"

"Why Gabriel! I thought my Uncle Gregory was considered as one to be envied his possessions! Yet you speak as though he and you were beggars."

"And so he is to be envied, as peasants go. But had he but his fair share of what he has toiled for, he would be a rich man. Instead he has been robbed of all but livelihood by these grasping and grinding nobles."

"Hush, Gabriel. I like not to hear you talk so," broke in his cousin. "The Great God surely knows what is best; and he has made the world so. The priest Felician, did but Sunday remind some of us,

whom he thought were too gaily decking ourselves, that too much finery was not becoming to the peasant girls. God, he said had given us princes, nobles, the clergy and the peasantry ; and each should be content in his own sphere, not trying to copy or intrude upon another."

"That may be all true enough," retorted the youth. "That there are different classes, it would be foolish to deny ; but what I cannot understand and what I do not believe that God intended, is, that one class—the peasants—should bear all the burdens, while all the rest go free, and but spend their energies in adding to the burdens of that other one. Does the king need more money for his palaces or to pay his troops ?—a fresh tax upon the peasants is imposed. If the nobles find their coffers running low by reason of their ceaseless carousings—they must make fresh exactions from the poor tillers of the soil. The same with the priests : when the church requires money—to the peasants they also come, and do coerce us by holding up the terrors of the Pope's displeasure, do we dare to complain !"

"Gabriel, Gabriel !" remonstrated his companion. "Be careful what you say. At least say nothing against the Holy Fathers."

"I care not. It is the truth ; and why should I fear to speak it ? I have heard one talk not long since, who said that as even Jesus Himself was called the 'Carpenter's Son,' and went about among the common people, ever laboring to help them and curing their diseases, so if He were now on earth,

would He visit the peasants and strive to help them. He taught that all men were equal and so all men should be equal now: and as he proclaimed against the priests then, so would He now, since they and our rulers are become even worse than were the priests and rulers of the Jews. That is something I know not much about; but such talk seems reasonable and these thoughts will come and chase each other through my brain, day after day, till I am fain to believe that some day, there will be a reckoning, and that a terrible one for some one."

"No, No! Say nothing more of that, good Gabriel," cried the girl. "Oh! It would be terrible did anyone hear you talk thus.—What was that?" she exclaimed, turning in the direction of some bushes; "I thought I heard something move there."

"It is nothing," responded the young man, "You are nervous to-night, Izolda."

"Perhaps I am, but I felt the same strange feeling just then, as I did when that Tzigana girl spoke in my ear and looked so queerly at me after the dance with the stranger, the Comes Michael brought. Come, let us go in," and the two entered the low dark doorway together. As they disappeared, a figure arose from behind the bushes close to where they had stood, and the same gypsy girl, who had been present at the dance, or one strangely like her, moved away stealthily and vanished in the gloom.

CHAPTER II.

A TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE.

With his companion Cardenio de Gaul, Michael strolled leisurely along, enjoying to the full the beauties of the calm summer evening.

"Who, and what are these strange people you call 'Tziganes,' and where come they from?" asked Cardenio; "I have wandered much about in different lands, but never did I until to-night see such odd musicians. Unmannerly hounds, too: I was in much wonder, Michael, that you did not fell the impudent lout to the earth, when he came and demanded largess in such fashion."

"Oh, Andreas is no stranger to me," laughingly responded the young Comes, "and I have quite gotten used to his surly ways. As for knocking him down for his impudence, that would make him no more civil; and beside he would be sure to treasure up the blow, for which if he had not opportunity to square the account himself, some of his people would be certain to do it for him, and in no pleasant way either. It is plain that the Tziganes are strangers to you or you would scarce advise such treatment. They are harmless enough if you let them alone and be careful not to leave much of value lying within their reach."

"Are there many of them hereabout, or do they inhabit some one part of the land?"

"No. There are not a great number of them near Marot. To the south and east, particularly in Transylvania, they are more numerous. When you visit the Vayvode of that principality you may perhaps find opportunity of observing them, though in no place do they gather together in great numbers. Andreas claims to be a prince among his own people, and that black-eyed daughter of his will ever speak of him as though he were the ruler of a great nation. If you could get him to talk, he would doubtless tell you most solemnly, that he and his people are under penance imposed by the Pope, to wander about the world in punishment for having in their own country twice apostatized under the persuading influence of Turkish scimiters, when those infidels overran the land. Andreas is a sly rogue, but honest and faithful in his own way. If you care to listen I will tell you what I know of him.

"Years ago, when I was but a lad, while with my father on one of his frequent visits to the Vayvode of Transylvania, I came upon this wanderer in the forest where he had established his camp, not far from the castle. A curious enough abode it was, half tent and half bower made out of tattered rags and boughs of trees. His wife, who had at her breast a babe,—probably the same dark-eyed girl who is with him now—and half a dozen starved looking dogs, were his companions. The day was raw and cold; nevertheless he lay idly beneath a tree, twang-

ing a rude harp and singing blithely to himself, apparently quite content with his lot, while the woman crouched over a smoking fire of sticks at the entrance of the hut, striving to keep herself and babe from freezing. The dogs rushed ferociously forth as I drew near and would, I verily believe, have torn me limb from limb, had the Tzigana not interfered and catching up a huge stick, belabored them soundly until they drew snarlingly away. I thanked him and quickly withdrew, glad to put a safe distance between myself and such ravenous beasts, though I was loath to depart without having had a better look at his camp, about which there was a certain wild pictur-esquefulness,— though I doubted me not that there was beneath the surface a fair share of misery also. That this was true, I had ample proof upon a later day, as you shall presently hear.

"That night it snowed, and as it snowed the wind rose to a gale, which lashed and roared about the castle walls and shrieked above the high battlements, as though legions of fiends were pursuing one another among its many turrets. A night to make one shiver and draw his mantle tighter as he edged more closely to the fire, which burned in the great hall, and mutter a prayer for the belated traveler who would find himself overtaken in that awful tempest, while dark misgivings came to more than one mind of the gruesome finds which would be made by hardy woodcutters in the spring, as they passed the spot where some huge winter's drift has had its grim secrets laid bare by the melting beams of the strengthened

sun. Ever and anon a mightier blast with louder howlings would shake the castle from its dungeons upward until it rocked again, and seemed as though to come crashing in ruins about our heads. Then quiet would prevail a space till one would say that the fury of the gale was surely spent, and all would think he indeed must be right, when with a crash and deafening uproar like war engines suddenly let loose, it rose again, shaking and battering the huge pile until you would have declared that we were in the throes of the most dire assault that ever fortress was called upon to brave. It was as though ten thousand and ten thousand more savage warriors of the Turkish hordes, with their wild rallying cries, were advancing on the place and striving to scale the giddy heights of those high battlements, while bolts from six score battering rams and belching cannons hailed upon the roofs.

"The wild night passed at last and morning broke with smiling sun, which looked upon a dazzling scene. The snow was here and there and everywhere, covering all things with its whitening folds. High up upon the castle walls 'twas 'plashed like the white foam which a great wave throws skyward when it breaks powerless at the foot of some grand rock, and loath to accept defeat climbs up and ever upward, in vain attempt to perch its silvery crest upon the brow of the conquering cliff. 'Twas in every crack and crevice, on every branch and twig, piled high on roof and walls and in each doorway, while windows were all lost to sight in one dazzling, sparkling, shining

robe of whiteness. The air was sharp and crisp with frost, so that the breaking of a branch under its load of snow in the depths of the forest sounded loud and clear as though close at hand. But though the sight was glorious, yet had it a grim side, for all sight or trace of roads was lost and many of the poor peasants in their little huts were brought nigh to death, and some e'en tasted it, through lack of food and impotence to break their snowy barriers. For five long days we were as though beleaguered, and though much was done to clear and break the highways, yet we saw nought of the outside world for all that space. On the sixth morn report was made of something moving near to the edge of the forest some distance off, and all were eager to know what it could be. Some there were ready to declare that 'twas a man striving to gain the castle, while others more confidently affirmed that a huge bear disturbed in his winter's sleep by the frolic of the blast, had come prowling forth to learn the cause of his molesting. We watched a while until the moving shape was lost to sight among the drifts, and soon to our remembrance. At noon, however, a high bank of snow burst suddenly through, and there came rolling into the space now cleared about the castle's kitchen doorway, a Tzigana clutching firmly in his arms a bundle, which though he now was almost quite bereft of sense and strength, he still hugged closely to him and stumbling and falling dragged his wearied frame within the entrance. The servants of the Vayvode's household, grown fat and sleek with much of feasting

and little work, were well primed for horseplay and treated him not gently.

"'Out of here,' cried one.

"'But leave the bundle,' quoth another.

"'Tis no place for Tziganes,' called a third, while a fourth shouted.

"'We'll throw him back into the snow mound again, for our entertainment.'

"This last caught favor and a rush was made at the poor Andreas—for he it was—who answering never a word, put his back against the door post and drawing a keen blade, while he still kept firm grip of his precious bundle, made ready to receive them. This they were not so ready for and one and all stopped short, each waiting for the other to go in,—like kennel dogs of no hunting breed, who snap and snarl so long as quarry shows the heels, but draw off and whine in terror when he shows his fangs. What might have happened I cannot tell; but at that moment I, who had been roaming through and through the castle those dull days not knowing what to do, hearing the hubbub as I passed the stair, came down to see what made the stir, and when I saw the purport of it, sternly bade them cease. They, all grateful for the chance to cover their retreat, obeyed quickly and now all strove to make him welcome. He came close to the fireplace and there disclosed his load, which was indeed most pitiful. A little babe well wrapped in rags, yet blue with cold, the copy of a corse lay there. 'Twas long before we knew if

aught of the spark of life remained, but so it was that after a time she did revive, and life was saved.

“ Poor Andreas’ tale. It was a bitter one. The wild hurricane as it swept along had blown his poor shelter down about their heads; but with much struggling they had contrived to keep a bough or two above them, which the snow covering had formed a cave, where they were not so hopeless until the pangs of hunger,—which for a time they appeased by the sacrifice of one lean dog, who had remained with them—had added to their woes. On the sixth morning of their imprisonment, the partner of his wanderings and the mother of his child lay cold in death, and he in desperation then had broken forth, expecting nothing better than the same fate, yet braved to make one effort for the life of this, his child.

“ As soon as it was practicable, the Tzigana returned to bury the body of his dead spouse and I, who felt no small sympathy, went with him to lend what aid I might. Since that day he has often crossed my path, and though he does ever seem surly and gruff of speech as he was to-night, yet am I vain enough to believe that to do me a real service he would be well pleased did the chance but come in his way. The father of the girl Izolda with whom you danced just now, at one time took in and succored him when he was with his child was well nigh done to death by wanton outlaws, in the hills near to the Turkish borders: and more than once since then have Andreas and his daughter shown that they are not ungrateful for his mercy.”

The Spaniard showed more interest at this last remark than he had evidenced during the recital of Michael's narrative, and questioned him:

"Who then and what is this dark-haired village beauty? She seemed indeed no common maid, but hath a bearing far above her class. Her step and carriage in that measure was of an airiness and grace, which would make envious even some of our *senoras* of fair Castile. She looks not one of the peasant girls?"

"'Tis whispered," responded the young Comes, "that there flows in her veins the proudest blood of all Hungary. The mother of the girl, some say, was the daughter of Matthias Corvinus, the greatest of Magyar kings, by a simple maiden of surpassing beauty, who met oft with her unknown lover by the side of Danube opposite to his gay castle of Visegrád, until having learned by chance of the exalted rank of her lover she went crazed with terror, and made an end of life by plunging into the river. Her father is a poor gentleman of Transylvania, a retainer of the Vayvode from whom he has indeed a small castle, which, however, he has not the means to maintain. The maid, his daughter, he brought hither to his sister's home when her mother died some years gone by."

"Ho! Ho! My Michael. Then you also take example by your great and wise ruler, and deign to turn aside from the upper walks to dally with a village maid? I blame you not, my friend, but the rather would bear testimony that your artistic taste

hath by no means played you false. I would indeed that I might find favor in the eyes of one so regal. Come, is there not another such beauty in yon hamlet, you could find me, with whom I might while away a few of the idle hours, lightly, while you are so busily engaged with that tireless brush of yours. One who would wax tragic when I had drunken my fill and the hour of separation came, would but add zest to the play. What say you? Can you suit my taste without sacrificing your own beauty, which I dare not ask?"

Michael heard him out impatiently.

"Nay! Nay!" he cried, "believe me, you mistake and do both the damsel and myself injustice by such suspicions: and you may be assured that you will in no wise find our peasant maids so light of virtue as you now seem to fancy."

With a shrug and an incredulous smile at the young man's warmth, Don Cardenio made profuse apologies and the two entered the castle gates together.

CHAPTER III.

A BAFFLED GALLANT.

Like many another young painter, Michael Dobozy was an enthusiast. Fired with a certain species of religious zeal in his art, born of a short residence in Italy amid all the stirring influences of the Renaissance, and feeling that he also should produce one of the faces so prevalent upon the canvas of the period, he had become imbued with the desire to paint a Magdalene. For some time he had been looking about him for a model suitable for so important an undertaking, but without success, until one day he had bethought him of the little peasant maid, who in his boyhood days had oftentimes been his companion in rambles among the forests and streams of far off Transylvania and, in later years, about the meadows in the vicinity of his father's castle. Well did he remember how he had ever expressed the fullest confidence in his ability to protect her from any and every danger—his four years seniority seeming to her childish mind to make him a most valorous champion. He had not yet seen her since his return from Rome; but she had to his boyish ideas been pretty in those days, and who knew but that she might have grown into a beautiful woman. He would know

at once, so forthwith set out for the home of the uncle with whom she had dwelt. On the way thither he met the object of his search, and was fain to acknowledge to himself that she surpassed his utmost expectations. Here indeed was the one most fitted to be the center of the picture, which he fondly hoped was to take him with rapid strides into a high niche of the temple of fame. Not that he was shallow and vainglorious, for he loved his art for its own sake alone: but like all in youth he was ambitious and sanguine of success.

Izolda Dózsa was perhaps not the ideal of what the majority of painters would have chosen for a Magdalene: but there was a certain indescribable tinge of melancholy and a soulful, yearning expression about her features in repose, which more than compensated for any slight defects of form or carriage. Full of his theme, the artist at once broached the subject, and with the same masterful setting aside of her objections, which had marked their intercourse in childhood days, had quickly gained her consent and arranged for regular sittings. These were to be in the open air, for after all Michael was far more of a landscape, than a portrait painter, and proposed having a considerable background to his central figure. It occurred to him, that to show the face of his Magdalene in strong relief, with the sombre setting of the dark masses of the Bakonyer Wald, as they appeared in the rays of the declining sun, would be unique. He accordingly selected a spot upon the outskirts of the village on the side farther from

his father's castle, and the first sitting was to take place on the afternoon following his visit to the village dance with Don Cardenio.

As he wended his way to the appointed place that afternoon, Michael's artistic eye became enraptured with the splendid view spread out before his vision. The rays of the declining sun threw into strong relief the fields of waving grain, which stretched in golden billows away to the distant horizon, there at last to break at the foot of the sentinel hills, while what might have become monotony was broken here and there by patches of low bushes—of trees there were none—or by groups of busy peasantry engaged in cutting the ripened ears; for the work of gathering in the bountiful harvest had already begun. Truly an ideal pastoral scene: and no wonder that the young man stood wrapped in admiration within a rod or two of his destination, and became quite oblivious of the object which had brought him hither. He would probably have remained lost in meditation till darkness fell, had he not presently been rudely awakened from his day dreaming by a piercing scream, which rang out close beside him.

True to her promise, Izolda had reached the appointed spot some few minutes previous to the coming of Michael, and had thrown herself down beside a clump of bushes to await the arrival of the artist and to arrange her toilet as nearly as possible according to his directions. She shook out the heavy masses of her abundant tresses, released her embroidered waist at the neck, laying bare the purity of

a delicate throat, and this done, reclined at ease, a tempting picture even for an unartistic eye one would hazard. And so it proved; for as she began to grow impatient at the delay of the young Comes, a shadow fell upon the grass, and as she looked up, she perceived that a stranger had approached from the opposite direction. Yet not a stranger altogether, as a second glance assured her, when she recognized the young Spaniard, who had accompanied Michael the previous evening: and hot anger rose within her at the painter at this apparent evidence of his lack of delicacy, in bringing this stranger as a spectator of his work, with her as model—a resentment which increased as she noted the bold stare of admiration with which he regarded her. She sprang hastily to her feet and blushing the while, endeavored to re-fasten her disarranged neckwear; but he strove to restrain her, speaking with insolent assurance.

“Nay, nay, fair charmer, do not so quickly seek to conceal the beauties which enchant me. It grieves me that you have forsaken that posture of inviting repose. Had you known of my coming, I should certainly have thought that you awaited me: but if it was for another, why should I be jealous? Am not I here first? And I flatter me that my society for an hour will be as pleasant as that of your rustic swain. Come, let us recline at ease while we have converse,” and he laid a constraining hand upon her arm.

She sprang back and stood regarding him indignant, with flashing eyes and clenched hands.

“So I have displeased the Senora. How un-

fortunate am I. Pray pardon me and how I can regain your favor. It surely is not my fault that your lover delays his coming; and I would gladly make amends for his neglect by being doubly entertaining. Come, my sweet partner of the csárdas, grant me but one kiss, and I will sing you a love song of fair Castile such as has ravished the hearts of many noble ladies of that sunny land :" and with impudent assurance he made to pass his arm about her waist. But Izolda waited not for his embrace, instead turning to flee. With an oath he sprang after her and caught her by the wrist. It was then that the frightened girl gave voice to the screams which so startled Michael, and striking out madly with her free hand she struck him squarely in the face with her clenched fist, to such good purpose as to cut open his lip. Gnashing his teeth the now infuriated ruffian dropped her arm and seized her loose hair with both hands, swinging her savagely to the ground. What further violence he might have been guilty of was at that moment frustrated by Michael, who came crashing through the bushes and, with a bound to the side of the cowardly hound, gave him a buffet which stretched him full length upon the earth and made his head ring again.

"What infamy is this, de Gaul?" he demanded angrily, to which question the Spaniard answered not a word, but made several ineffectual attempts to rise. Leaving him to recover himself as best he might, Michael turned his attention to the frightened girl, who fortunately had not been injured by her rough treatment.

"What means it all, Izolda?" he questioned with much solicitude, as he assisted her to rise. "Are you hurt? Verily, if so much as a scratch, that wretch shall pay dearly for it."

The maiden's cheeks were all aflame with mingled shame and indignation, as with downcast eyes and heaving breast, she answered his enquiries in the negative and said briefly, that she knew not what it meant except that as she awaited his coming, this friend of his had molested her. The young artist turned in the direction of the recumbent gallant, but that worthy had dragged himself to his feet and was now discreetly withdrawing. As Michael turned, however, he made him an exaggerated bow, and said in a meaning tone which brought the hot tears into the eyes of the already much distressed girl.

"A thousand pardons, Senor Michael. I perceive that I have unwittingly encroached upon your preserves, notwithstanding your denials of last night," and with a wave of his hand departed.

Michael took a quick step or two forward as though to follow him, stopped irresolute for a moment or two, and then went back to the side of the coward's victim.

"It grieves me much, Izolda, that you should have met with such treatment at the hands of one who is a so called friend of mine, and while you had come forth in response to my request. I would that I could undo the happenings of the last half hour: but think not too seriously of the matter. He is but an idle vagabond, and talked of leaving us to-morrow,

which he will do now of a surety. You will have small desire now for any posing, nor have I any for painting. I will first walk home with you and will then seek out my father and acquaint him with the character of his guest: for guest of his is he, rather than friend of mine, since I liked him not from the first."

In silence the girl walked with him to the village, and as they reached the path which led up to her uncle's door, bade him a brief good-night. The baffled Spaniard meanwhile, as he slunk away from the scene of his defeat, turned more than once toward where he could distinguish the two moving figures, and raising his clenched hand muttered between his teeth:

"Wait but a little while, my gay young Count. You will find it was no light thing to strike Cardenio de Gaul. He will repay an hundred fold. Yea, even to the infernal world itself would he follow an enemy, and once in his power even the punishments meted out by the Grand Inquisitor, Saint Dominic, will be as nothing to the vengeance of de Gaul."

Izolda paused at the threshold of the farmhouse and looked across the plain to where the stalwart form of the artist could be seen striding homeward, then fixed her gaze upon the distant sky, where the reflected rays of the now hidden sun touched up the fragments of the lazy clouds, clustering about the mountain brows in a beautiful medley of color in which rose tints predominated. For some minutes she continued to gaze with a far away look in her

eyes, until the color faded into greyness; then with a shiver and a deep sigh, she went in with the air of one who had just made a renouncement of all that the world held dear. And could we but read her inmost thoughts, we would find that something of that nature was indeed taking place.

"After all her cousin Gabriel must be right," she mused. She was looked down upon as only a peasant girl: and the peasants had no rights. They were of a different clay from the nobles, and were allowed to exist merely that they might serve these greater ones. Even the young Comes Michael himself, though he appeared so kind and resented the insult the Spaniard offered her, yet was a friend and companion of this same ruffian, and doubtless as the dastard said in parting, was aroused principally because he found another trespassing where he considered that he had the prior right. It pleased him just now to treat her kindly and well, because he had certain plans needing her aid. She remembered now how confidently he had claimed her services as model for his painting, a confidence which she had fondly imagined was but a continuance of his old time boyish freedom; but now she could plainly see that he but exercised his right to command one of her class. It would have been just the same, had his taste happened to fix upon some other village maid. He would be gay and generous while she pleased him; but when his undertaking was finished, or did she cross him, she would be flung aside as lightly and with as little thought as the blades of grass he crushed

unthinkingly under his feet as he strode across the meadow. Well, she must resign herself to take her place where she belonged,—among the poor, despised peasant girls, who did they happen to attract for a season the fleeting attention of one of the lords of the land, must be dutifully pleased there at, bask in the sunshine while it lasted and be content presently to be tossed aside as the useless skin from which the fruit has been sucked. No matter that her heart beat hard at the bitter thought, while her spirit rebelled hotly within her and cried out in a very agony that the God above surely did not design or approve of such a division of his creatures. No matter that injustice and cruelty seemed but weak words with which to condemn such conditions. Such was the Hungarian peasant's lot; and in the words of the village priest, which she had but last night so glibly repeated to her cousin Gabriel, they should seek to be content with their lot. But must it ever be thus? Must men and women with feelings, with desires, with brains, with *souls*, continue to live and die in this low estate? The thought was maddening, so she would cease to think of it; and as for Michael and his foreign companion, she must strive to blot them also from her mind. Yet try as she would, she could not seem to force herself to forsake the many gathering memories of those childhood days, when she and the young painter had romped and made merry together, among the hills and valleys of far off Transylvania, ere her mother's death, after which she had been brought by her heart-broken father to live here with

his sister, while he went back to his lonely home to drown his sorrow as best he might. Those were indeed happy days, and she would that they were back again. At any rate, why should she not be back in that dear old home? Was it not her duty to cheer and comfort that father whose kindly care she so fondly remembered? What was the meaning of those words he had spoken, as he left her weeping at her uncle's door, that cold stormy day when they parted.

"Be brave, sweet Izolda, and should it be that I do not see you more, ever keep this thought in mind, that in your veins flows the proudest blood that all Hungary or the world can boast; for it is that of the greatest and noblest of Magyar kings."

Often had she pondered those words, which now seemed burnt into her brain, and vainly thought that after all she was no more humble than the young Comes of Marot: but the scales had dropped from her eyes at last, and she could see that she was but a common peasant girl, whom none did deign to honor. She would have speech with her aunt and uncle that very night about returning to her father, who surely must have need of her, and she would spend the remainder of her youth in ministering to his comfort. But she found that her uncle had not yet returned from the day's work in the fields, while her aunt was busy with household cares; so, anxious to escape from her thoughts, she soon retired to her humble little room in the back part of the house, and made ready for slumber.

Sleep, however, was not for Izolda that night, and for hours she tossed about while all manner of sad and bitter thoughts chased themselves through her throbbing brain. At length a storm arose, which presently had a strange soothing effect upon her excited feelings, and she lay quiet, wrapped in a sort of dull sadness, listening to the roaring of the wind and the rolling of the thunder, while ever and anon the darkness of her chamber was illuminated to noon-day brightness, by the lightning which flashed in from the small, uncurtained window. Suddenly, in a pause between the shocks, she became conscious that a voice was calling from somewhere out in the storm, and as she strained her ear to listen it seemed that her own name was the burden of that call. "Surely not," she argued, it must be but the vagaries of her overwrought imagination. But, no; there it was again, and this time it sounded louder and more clear.

"Izolda, Izolda, Izolda Dózsa;" with more that she could not separate from the confusion of the storm. She sat up in bed, wondering who it could be and what was wanted of her. It could be no one of her uncle's household; for she had heard each come and retire for the night. What should she do? There was something unnatural about this midnight summons. Now it rose again through a lull in the storm.

"Izolda Dózsa. Runs there in thy veins the blood of the Corvinus, thou wilt surely not desert in his extremity thy father who begat thee. Fly then,

Izolda. Fly to his side and succor him in his sore distress. Izolda, Izolda, haste thee away!"

The young girl was now thoroughly startled and frightened. What could it mean? Was this summons of earth, and what did it portend? Even as she pondered, a more brilliant sheet of light than formerly invaded the room, and framed in the opening of her window she saw the face of the gypsy girl, who had uttered the mysterious warning against the Spaniard; and as she gazed a hand was raised with a beckoning gesture. For an instant only, then all was darkness as before. In amazement she waited for the next flash, but when it came the window was a blank, while now further away and growing fainter, she heard the voice.

"Izolda Dózsa. Runs in your veins the blood of the Corvinus? Come Izolda, come."

And now all terror vanished; but in its place came a clear, settled purpose. She would go to her father. Rising, she dressed in haste, and without a thought as to how she was to accomplish the journey over the many miles of rugged country, which separated her from that parent to whose side she was thus mysteriously summoned, she stepped out into the storm and sped away in the darkness.

CHAPTER IV.

MICHAEL'S VAIN APPEAL.

With hot wrath still burning in his heart, the son of the Comes of Marot strode rapidly homeward, and on arrival at the castle immediately sought the presence of his father, whom he found alone in a small room opening off the great dining hall. He was standing at the open casement looking out upon the fading landscape lost in deep thought: so much so that he appeared not to notice the entrance of his son, but remained with his back to the door, until the latter advised him of his presence by addressing him; then he turned and quietly returned his greeting. Tall and erect, rather spare of flesh, of dark complexion, a high forehead round which clustered dark masses of hair just tinged with grey, heavy, bushy eyebrows from underneath which clear, grey eyes looked forth, with a steadfast questioning gaze which made it extremely difficult for any insincerity to escape the notice of their possessor,—the Comes was altogether of most commanding presence. Twice a widower, his second bereavement befalling some twelve years previously, Louis Dobozy had retired largely within himself, and though passionately fond of his two children, was far from demonstrative in his affection.

"Well, Michael, my thoughts were but now busy concerning you and I am glad that you have come in just at this time. We can talk of some matters of great importance, in the arranging of which I trust you will be able to give me no small aid."

"Truly, will I so endeavor, my Sire;" returned the son. "But I come to you now with a complaint, and if it please you, would have you dispose of it before proceeding with the other matters which you would deal with. Have I your permission to speak of it?" The elder having nodded his head in sign of assent, the young man proceeded.

"It is concerning the Spaniard, Don Cardenio de Gaul, who is at present your guest, and who is, I grieve to have to inform you, far from being the courtly gentleman he doth appear. I did but just now interrupt him as he was grievously insulting one of the village girls, whom he had happened upon alone and unprotected; and I did indeed have to lay violent hands upon the ruffian to persuade him to desist."

The Comes at first appeared quite amused at the heat displayed by his son, but at the concluding words of his outburst he grew suddenly grave and demanded hastily.

"What do you mean. Come, tell me quickly all of the matter. How happened it, and where?" Michael, well pleased at the evident interest manifested by his father, was nothing loath, and at once gave him a full account of the afternoon's incident, concluding with, "And now, Sire, it seemeth to me to be little short

of scandalous if this man be allowed to dwell longer beneath your roof and to have the privilege of the society of my sister Anna. I pray that you will at once give him his dismissal. Gladly would I take the matter into mine own hands, and fight him to the death if needs be for his wanton cruelty toward my oldtime playmate; but your orders, Sire, have ever been so strict with regard to such procedure, that I refrain."

The Comes knitted his heavy eyebrows while he sat silent in deep thought for some moments, but at length he spoke.

"This is most unfortunate, and I would that it had not happened. It may be as you say, discreditable that Don Cardenio should have been so violent, but then 'twas but one of the villager's daughters, and I am concerned that you should have quarreled with him over so small a matter. It is most important that we should retain the favor of this man at this time, and I trust,—yea, I even command,—that you take no further notice of the affair, but if opportunity offer, treat him with all courtesy and invite him to forget your difference. 'Twas but this morning that he informed me of his purpose to leave us on the morrow, and I would have him depart in all friendliness."

Michael fairly gasped in his astonishment at the course commanded by his father, and hastened to expostulate.

"But, father, if it had been my sister Anna, instead of this village maid, you surely would not give me

such counsel: rather would you yourself not rest until the wretch had been well punished for his insolence. Then why should the offense be passed over so lightly, because it concerns only a poor peasant girl? Is not her honor as dear to her as that of the highest born damsel in all Hungary?" The elder man smiled again at the impetuosity of the younger, and paused a moment before rejoining.

"These words, Michael, prove to me more clearly than the strongest assurances you could give, that your time while at Rome was well spent and not wasted in idleness and vice. You evidently have not yet learned to view such matters in the light that many men do, and though I am somewhat surprised at your lack of discernment, it nevertheless rather pleases me. Can it be that you have never observed that the majority of our young men, while they pay every respect to maidens of their own station, deem it not unbecoming to comport themselves with much more freedom, when those of the inferior orders are concerned? Such an one, it would appear, is our present guest; and you must not be too severe upon him, especially as the girl has escaped him with nothing worse than a fright. The peasantry have long ago learned to expect such treatment. Indeed, I doubt not, but that many of our village wenches would have been secretly pleased to receive such marked attention from one so far above them. Your model must be extremely hard to please. But it will be just as well that you yourself do not begin to indulge in such pleasantry."

"I hope not, father. But why is it that the peasantry should expect such treatment, and why should not their women receive as much respect as those of the nobility? Why, indeed, should not the peasant himself be accorded better treatment? That is something which has filled my thoughts more and more of late; but I cannot seem to find an answer that satisfies. These people toil all day in the fields throughout the spring and summer, and then when the harvest comes the great bulk of the fruits of their labor is gathered—not into their barns and store-houses,—but into ours, while they, in payment for their endeavors, seem to have scarce enough left to keep themselves and children from famishing. Yet we, who do little or nothing, have much to waste. Surely, such a division is not right!"

Again the elder smiled.

"As the owners of the soil, we of the nobility must in justice receive the greater share. Consider but for a moment how helpless would the people be and how utterly impossible for them to gain, even sufficient to keep from starving, did we not provide them with the land for tillage."

"True, Sire. But was not the land here long before either the nobility or the peasantry? How, then, comes it that the few possess all the soil, while the many are compelled to serve them in such subjection, in order to gain a bare subsistence?"

"You put strange questions, my son, and some that it would be as well for you to be careful that none other should hear you ask, or trouble will be in store

for you. However, you should know that originally all the lands of the kingdom were centered in the king, and he hath, from time to time, for services rendered, made over the rights of certain districts to his princes and lords to administer as seems good to them. They, in turn, parcel it out to the peasantry, to till for their benefit, but, of course, must needs provide the peasant with his subsistence off the products."

"Think me not so ignorant, father, as to need explanation of that. What I question is this: Why is not a more equal division of the results of their toil made? Surely, the tiller of the soil should receive a better share of the harvest. Granted that some portion should come to the nobles as the possessors of the lands, yet the greatest amount should in justice go to him who earns it by his toil. It is this unequal division I quarrel with. The one has little share of blessing, while he bears all the burdens; yet the other hath almost all the blessing and no part of the burden. And now, it seems, that the poor peasant's daughters may be robbed, even of their honor, with impunity!" This last was said in a sad and bitter tone, and Michael continued, despite the gathering frown upon his father's brow.

"Turn whither he will, there is no redress for the poor down-trodden peasant. Even solace from religion is denied him. If he go to his priest he is there met by demands for a further share of his scanty substance: for even in the matter of the church we of the nobility refuse to bear any part of the burden,

and the priest has perforce to turn to the already groaning peasantry—or starve else. Then having taken a generous share of the poor wretch's last crust, he has no greater comfort to offer than to admonish him to bear patiently the burdens heaped upon him and give still more faithful and uncomplaining service to his masters. It is surely no wonder that the people become alienated from the church, and so many of them have lately been found guilty of heresy. Pardon me, Sire, if I speak more freely than I ought; but I have, in my goings about for sketching, mixed somewhat with the common people, and have heard them talk when they were in ignorance of who was near. 'Twas only a few days since that I heard one talking to a group and urging them to quit their priests, thus:

"The Blessed Savior," he said, "did Himself work to earn His daily bread, even as did they, and warned men in His time of the avarice and wickedness of these leeches, while He called all men to come to Him for rest. We,"—he continued,—"are in His eyes as good as any priest or noble either, and it is not right that we should suffer and toil for them." From what he said, it seemed that he had heard someone read such things from a printed paper at another village, and I doubt not that there is much of this same thought abroad; for which I cannot blame them. As I have wandered abroad much of late, to talk with nature, this state of strife, in which men appear to live is so at variance with her peaceful face, that I am truly persuaded the Great God

could not have intended matters to be thus, and that a day of retribution must be in store for the princes of Hungary for their treatment of the people. This noble Magyar race surely was meant for better things!"

"Enough, Michael!" broke in the Comes, impatiently. "We have already talked too long on this trivial matter. The nobles of Hungary act no differently than have princes ever since the world began. It was ever so, and it would seem to be God's own arrangement for the nation. His own people had their servitors, and the ancient princes held the common people in subjection far more severely than is done in this land. But come, no more of this: I have matters of great import which demand my attention, and concerning which I desire your assistance and counsel. Listen: I have to-day had letters from the Palatine, Báthory, which show that the position of affairs in the kingdom is at this moment grave; and he does demand my co-operation in the endeavors which he and others are making to save us from disaster. Here also," (waving his hand to a table upon which a number of papers lay scattered) "are letters in the same matter from the Comes of Temes, Stephen Telegdy and the Bishop of Csanàd. All see the same danger ahead, and are united in the purpose to overcome it if possible. Would that they were also as united upon the means to accomplish that purpose! Disensions will, as usual, I fear, cause us to come to grief."

"What danger menaces the kingdom, Sire? Are

the Turks making another onslaught upon our borders? If such is the case I am certainly ready to buckle on the sword and do my poor best to defend the land from those infidels."

"I would that it were the Turks. They would be a far lesser evil than that which now threatens. It seems that our good Archbishop Bakacs, who so confidently expected to sit upon the throne of Saint Peter, has, as a balm to his wounded feelings, petitioned his successful Italian rival to be allowed to organize here in Hungary, a crusade against the Turks, and has had his request granted by Leo. He is losing no time, but has already commenced to preach his crusade among the peasantry, who are becoming much excited at the prospect. Báthory designs, if possible to have the plan vetoed by the Diet; but many are ruled by Bakacs, and I fear that he will be able to outnumber us when the time comes for decision."

"That, surely is no great calamity," exclaimed Michael, "but rather a glorious opportunity for Hungary—to strike a blow against the Sultan, while fanning the religious zeal of the peasantry, would indeed serve a double purpose. Surely, 'tis a Heaven sent inspiration to the worthy Archbishop. I do feel inclined to myself 'take the cross' and embark upon the venture."

"Nay, nay, Michael. You see not the matter from its serious side. Were all the peasantry religious zealots, what you say would be very truth; but 'tis not so. For too many have been thinking and talk-

ing in the strain you but now spoke of. Think not that you are the first to notice the discontented state of the common people. Many of them have listened to heretical talk and teaching, and are ripe to break with their priests, of whom they begin to think themselves the equals in the sight of God. 'Tis this which makes it a dangerous thing to think of putting arms into the hands of the peasantry, who once in possession, might take a notion to use them against their masters, instead of the infidels. Beside that, the season is upon us when all are needed in the fields to gather the harvest. To draw off thousands at this time, would leave the nobles in a serious plight for want of field labor, were there no other danger to fear. A strong effort must be made to influence the Diet against the project and no time must be lost in doing so. Will you undertake a journey for me?"

"Assuredly. You may command me upon any mission you deem desirable. Whither would you have me journey, and when shall I make ready to set forth? I will gladly start at once if you bid me: I trust you will be not impatient with me, however, if I do but utter my conviction, that this fear of the nobles to sanction such a meritorious design as a crusade against our national enemies, the Turks, goes far to show the truth of the assertion that great injustice has been practiced toward the peasants, else would we be ready and eager to encourage them in such an enterprise, instead of striving to keep arms out of their hands, through fear that they may be turned in just retribution against ourselves."

The Comes knitted his brows impatiently during this latter speech but chose to ignore it.

"To-morrow will do, my son. First, I would have you go to Temesvar, and assure the Comes that I most heartily join with him in his opposition to this scheme of the Archbishop, and am doing and will do my utmost to assist him. Then I would have you press on to Transylvania and bear my greetings to the Vayvode, while I despatch other messengers to the Palatine, Treasurer and Bishop. As you well know, I am of the king's party: but at the same time I would continue friendly with Szapolyai, who if our fears be realized, must be prevailed upon to become our ally, and would be of much assistance when the danger is actually upon us. Even did the present evil not threaten, it is wise to conciliate him, since he is already so powerful, and, should he succeed in forcing the king to give his daughter in marriage to his son, will be still more formidable. In this you may perhaps be able to be of great use to me. You doubtless know what I mean? There was a time when the marriage of the daughter of the Vayvode to the son of the Comes of Marot was deemed possible." This last was said with an anxious, almost appealing look at the young man; then, after a short pause: "But that matter I leave in your hands. You as well as I can weigh the advantage that would result from being connected with the most powerful noble in all Hungary."

Michael gave no sign of either agreement or dis-

sent to his father's remarks, but rising to depart said :

" I shall be ready, Sire, to proceed upon this mission at early morning, or whenever it please you to dispatch me with your full directions, and will do my best to execute your commands correctly."

CHAPTER V.

CARDENIO'S FAIR DEFENDER.

Michael strode across the great hall after the conference with his father, and sought the apartments of his sister Anna, whither he was wont to resort for rest and solace when wearied and disheartened. As he approached the room where the young mistress was usually to be found engaged with needlework or playing upon her guitar, he heard her singing a weird Magyar love song to her own accompaniment, and the strain had already begun to exert a soothing influence upon his perturbed feelings ere he reached the doorway. But just inside the doorway he halted, while the smile faded from his face, and the gay greeting died away upon his lips: for the scene which met his eyes was far from pleasing to him.

His sister Anna (unlike the majority of Hungarian maidens and in contrast to her brother), was decidedly fair, betraying at once her German origin on the maternal side, for she was of the Comes' second marriage. As she sat now, or rather reclined upon a low couch in graceful abandon, with great masses of almost flaxen hair tossed lightly back from a broad, high forehead, beneath which large, expressive, blue eyes shone forth, while throat and neck of shapeliness

and whiteness of skin were shown off to full advantage, by the loose shawl thrown about her shoulders—she formed a pleasing picture indeed, thrumming the strings of the guitar to accompany a voice of almost plaintive sweetness and possessing to the full the peculiar softness and richness of the Magyar tongue.

But this was not the figure which so disconcerted the young artist. Near at hand, reclining with easy assurance upon a rug, almost at the feet of the fair singer, was the Spaniard whom he had but a few minutes since been urging his father to dismiss from the castle. 'Twas not his presence here, so much as the provoking air of perfect, easy, negligent content, which marked his demeanor, as though he were a privileged and frequent visitor, which so annoyed Michael, who after a moment's hesitation at the threshold, during which he was minded to withdraw, came forward into the room and advancing to the side of his sister, chided her playfully for having of late deprived him of much of her wonted companionship. He continued talking lightly, in an endeavor to command her undivided attention to the exclusion of Cardenio, whose presence he did not acknowledge by so much as a look. Anna, in her replies strove to include her visitor in the conversation, remarking that in the Senor de Gaul she had found a most gallant substitute for her errant brother, who after all she affirmed was the real truant, and called upon de Gaul to bear out her contention. This the polished courtier readily did though without himself directly addressing Michael, and at the first convenient open-

ing rose to withdraw. This he accomplished amid the most profuse adieux and with exaggerated deference, bending to kiss the hand of the fair Anna, and retaining it in his grasp far longer than was at all necessary—at least so thought her jealous brother, as he also noted the indulgent smile she bestowed upon him and the evident partiality which she manifested toward this gay cavalier.

His exit was scarcely accomplished ere Michael broke forth vehemently—

“Of a truth, Anna, I marvel how you can submit to have that scoundrel kiss your hand as though he were some favored friend. My hands fairly ached but now to seize him and forcibly hasten his departure, when he lingered so in making his farewells; and that most surely would I have done had I not my father’s express commands to have no further quarrel with him.”

“Why, brother! You surely know not what you say. Don Cardenio is a kind and most courteous cavalier, and until just now I had thought you were most friendly with him. And let me remind you, sir, that Anna Dobozy will not permit such treatment of her friends in her own apartments. I own I was much astonished at your courtesy toward him. Why this sudden and complete change in your regard for our guest?”

“Doubtless I owe you apology for my rudeness,” returned Michael, “Until to-day I had endeavored to be most courteous toward the Spaniard, as I should toward any other of my father’s guests—though I

must confess that try as I might, I could not bring myself to like him, and from what I have seen this day, I can now well understand that I could not."

"What hath he done? Tell me quickly. In truth it must be some awful crime, which doth so much exercise my noble brother." This was said in such a tone of half banter as to still futher incense the already much tired young painter.

"What hath he done?" he cried, "He has done that which would most quickly bring the blush of shame, to the cheek of each pure and virtuous damsels who heard of it, and with the blushes a tingling desire to lash the hound, who did it. A short while since, just outside the village, I hapt upon him most wantonly and cruelly abusing a poor village maid, because, forsooth, she waxed indignant and objected to his unwelcome caresses, which he would fain force upon her. I gave him one generous buffet, and would it had been a dozen."

To his intense surprise, the fair Anna lightly laughed, and instead of becoming virtuously indignant at such depravity, proceeded to gently rail upon him.

"Truly, thou art becoming a brave knight-errant my good Michael; and art greatly to be commended for thy promptness in flying to the aid of this village beauty, who doubtless, if the truth were told, bears you no good will for having arrived so inopportunely, and through reading her coy resistance, as born of

dislike, to have so roughly robbed her of the caresses which doubtless she coveted much, from one so noble."

"How can you speak so lightly, Anna? Surely you cannot fancy me so dull as to have mistaken the whole matter thus. Believe me, his designs were of the basest, and when I tell you that the young girl he so misused was Izolda, our sometimes playmate when we were all children together, you will no longer doubt."

"Is this Izolda now any different from the many other peasant girls?" was the cold retort. "Cease your revilings, brother. It ill becomes you to so persistently traduce the character of one who is your guest. If he hath acted lightly in this matter, it would be but after the manner of many of those at the Imperial court, where he has spent so much of his time. But I give credence to a higher motive for his action. He hath told me (though it was in all confidence, but I claim freedom to break it since 'tis but to clear his name), that he has become one of the followers of the illustrious Loyola, and is one of that leader's devoted band. His great object is that he might aid the Grand Inquisitor, in bringing to light and justice those heretics who are traitors to the faith and to His Holiness: and, in truth, the real object of his visit to Hungary, is to learn if can be, how far these evil doctrines have spread among the people, for it is reported that many of the peasantry

do trifles with such matters. I am quite ready to believe that his passage with the maid, was but a part of some plan to become friendly with these servitors, and thus gain knowledge which is denied him else."

Michael sighed and ceased to argue. "Twas plain that the crafty scoundrel had forstalled him, and in anticipation of exposure, had instilled this plausible story into the mind of his sister, who was devoutly religious, and had thus been approached upon her most susceptible side. Rising impatiently, he exclaimed :

"Say no more, Anna. We will not talk of the matter further. 'Tis evident that I am on the unpopular side to-day: I go to my father expecting justice, but find none: I come hither to you expecting sympathy, and again am I disappointed. Oh Hungary, Hungary! Mine own dear native land! What a cruel reckoning must be in store for thee! But fare thee well, sister. I depart at sunrise upon a mission for my father, and desire not to have any but the kindliest feelings toward thee as I go."

If Michael could have beheld his sister Anna, soon after he had left her presence, he would not have judged her so harshly. Standing in the centre of her chamber with hands tightly clenched and with white lips and flashing eyes she stamped her foot passionately upon the floor again and again while she fairly hissed between her teeth:

"The double-tongued villain, to come and talk thus

to me after having made love in that light fashion to a low-born peasant maid. Who knows but that he would flout me in the same manner if he did but dare ;" and again she stamped her foot in impotent rage.

CHAPTER VI.

AN OPPORTUNE ARRIVAL.

Propped up in his bed by an unglazed window, which looked out upon the rising peaks and frowning precipices of the Transylvanian Alps, George Dózsa lay, weak, wasted and—as he and his servitors thought—dying. Four weeks had he fought and wrestled with the great fever, which had gripped the man of hitherto iron constitution and caused him, who for years scorned bed and had from choice wooed slumber stretched upon the hard floor of the main hall of his half castle, half farm-house, or oftener rolled in a blanket upon the mountain side beneath the stars, to lie here helpless and racked with pain, entirely dependent the while upon the rude services of the two henchmen and rheumatic old gypsy woman, who beside himself were the only members of his neglected household. These, even now, as he lay almost at death's door, were engaged in a wordy warfare in the kitchen beyond, already quarreling as to the possession of such things as they had prospect of purloining, prior to the confiscation by the steward of the Vayvode, which they well knew would follow close upon the departure of the breath from out the body of their master.

Things had greatly changed with Dózsa since ten years before. Then was he strong and vigorous: his young wife, between whom and himself there existed a bond of the most passionate devotion, was constantly at his side, a sharer in all his plans and projects, while their little daughter Izolda was the light and sunshine of his home. He was not rich, yet was immeasureably better off than the down-trodden peasantry, who all about him struggled for a bare existence. Of gentle blood, he held his small estate subject indeed to the Vayvode, yet not as servitor; but rather as an ally whose common interests were his sufficient sureties. But cruel death had stolen as a thief into that home, and carried off the mate in whom he was so blessed. Almost crushed with grief, he quickly did make stern resolve, and placing his only child in the keeping of his sister at Marot, he henceforth devoted himself with all his energies to the warfare with the Turks, which was in constant progress on these, the outskirts of the kingdom. More than once had he gained the gratitude of the Vayvode for his ceaseless vigilance and tireless energy in these struggles. His prowess was known and respected alike by friend and foe, and many were the feats of strength credited to him—so much so that he was often referred to as “Hunyadi the Second.”

But at length had come a period of quiet. The marauding expeditions of the infidels, so vigorously resisted, became more rare and at last, for the time ceased entirely. Dózsa’s soldiers, who for the most part, were peasants occupying lands of the various

Transylvanian nobles, were by these called upon to disband and return to the tillage of the soil, in which, for their masters, there was far more of profit than in their campaigning: and these demands were acceded to by the Vayvode, in whose pay the soldiers were. This, despite the strenuous opposition of Dózsa, who pointed out that the freedom of the province from the incursions of their enemies, was due to the prowess of these very troops, and that to disband them was but to invite fresh attacks. But all his arguments were in vain. At the worst, the dangers he recited seemed now remote, and the Hungarian nobles were all too far sunk in their disgraceful course of self interest and entire disregard of the public weal, to be turned from their purposes by this man whom, though in time of war they were quite willing to look up to, accord unstinting honor and deference, in time of peace they were quite as willing to drop back into a position of obscurity.

Bitterly incensed at such ungrateful treatment, Dózsa threw up his military command, and retired to nurse his wrath in the seclusion of his own small estate, which was now smaller than ever, for he had not spared his own means when money was required to properly equip his followers. For such expenditure he received no return and but little thanks from the Vayvode, while for his own services, though highly praised at times, he received no pecuniary reward. Himself feeling keenly the pinch of poverty, he the more readily sympathized with the complaints of the peasantry, who, many of them, being long used

to the freedom of their life in camp, now conceived it a great hardship to be compelled to labor in the fields from early morn to sunset, for a bare subsistence only—the lion's share of the fruits of their labor being as usual claimed by the landholders,—and soured by his own experience, the disappointed soldier lent a ready ear to the narration of their grievances, until at last he had become a strong champion of the peasants in all their disputes with the nobles. This renderd his isolation from all of his own social state the more complete, and now that he had fallen a victim to disease, his utter loneliness became most marked.

He had made a brave struggle against this fever, but seemingly without avail. Of late he had been gradually growing weaker and weaker, until at last he felt constrained to admit to himself, that he, the victor in many an unequal encounter, was at last meeting defeat, and was forced to conclude that his remaining time on earth was but a matter of a few days at best—perhaps hours. This afternoon he had become plunged in a deep reverie, which had all the outward appearance of a stupor, and was so regarded by one of his servitors, who came in and finding him so, concluded that the end was fast approaching, and hastily retiring reported thus to his companions. The three, taught by the example of their superiors to think of all things only in the light in which they affected their own immediate welfare, lost no time in appropriating, each to himself, all that there seemed likelihood of his being able to conceal, and leaving

the supposedly dying man to meet death alone, with what fortitude he could muster.

Meanwhile Dózsa's reverie had not been altogether unpleasant. He lived again the days of his strong young manhood, when life seemed all joy and gladness. He lived again those joyous days which he and his fair young wife had spent in such sweet union of love and hope. He again with her hung in thankfulness and pride over the sleeping form of the little daughter, who had come to bless and give still greater gladness to their cloudless lives; and he played once more with that little one, in the gay romp and chase about the hillsides. And then the shadow came. Again he lived through those sad and weary weeks, when he had alternately cursed and prayed at the bedside of his idol, who, crushed by a fall from her horse, was fated after two months' daily agony, at last to meet death's cold embrace and be torn from the arms of her lover husband. Again he marked the tearful, steadfast gaze of the pitiful, questioning face of the little maiden, who like a small shadow dogged her father's footsteps, in touching, helpless endeavor to lighten the cruel burden he had to bear. He went again through the bitter wrench of the parting from that same little one, as he unclasped the clinging fingers from about his neck and almost roughly thrust her away from him, in vain effort to hide the agitation which might be considered as unmanly grief, when he had taken final leave of her at his sister's threshold and turned his face like a flint, toward the Turkish borders. Oh, how he longed to

feel once more, the touch of those soft arms about his neck, and to listen to the innocent chatter of the ingenuous maiden. Death, he felt would be robbed of all its terrors, could he but have her there at his bedside and hold her hand in his; and a bitter regret entered his heart that he had separated himself from her forever. True, he had believed it better for the child to be in safety, while he was subject to the varying chances of war; but, why had he not arranged for her to come to him again when he had returned to the quiet of his little castle? Mayhap, had her gentle ministering hands been near, it might have fared otherwise with him in his sickness. And after all had he made her position any more secure? Better surely for her to be subject to the cruel alarms and terrors of war, than fettered to the drudgery, slavery and indignity of a peasant girl's existence. These, and varying thoughts passed through his heated brain in quick succession until, unmarked by him, the night had fallen, and the cool dew descending without, chilled the night air which came creeping through the open window, so that he shivered as he lay, which, startling him from his reverie, made him persuaded that the last struggle was already beginning.

"Well," he muttered to himself. "If this my journey through life, be ending now, 'tis time a priest were summoned hither to shrive me, and make me ready for my entering into that other world. Ho, Gregory. Hither, Simon. Why answer you not my call?" But though he shouted and called and called

again no one came near and his very voice seemed to mock him in his desolation, while out of the gloom which settled round, spectral forms now were gathering, and with gibbering tongues appeared to taunt him as he called. Oh, horrors thrice compounded. Must he die thus? Thus wretched was his end to be? The thought was maddening, and again and again he cried aloud.

For two hours, full, this lasted, then came a lull. Exhausted he lay back in the dense darkness, while a hush which was unnatural fell around, to accentuate the suffering of his lonely vigil. But hark! Is not that a step he hears without his window? He strains his ear to listen. All is silent again and he is persuaded that his faculties are now failing and do but deceive him. But again he hears the sound, and now it seemed that a voice,—strange to him and yet not altogether strange, which faintly stirs some long forgotten memory—breaks the stillness and is the sweetest music to his ears that ever ravished them. Aloud, he calls once more.

“Come hither, friend, whoe'er it chance thou art, make haste to come to me.” The step is now within the hall, and straining to pierce the gloom, he is conscious of an indistinct form, while a soft voice asks in doubt, as the footfall hesitates, and seemed half-inclined to flee.

“Who calls? Who now has need of me?”

“Leave me not I pray!” he gasps in an agony of fear. “ ‘Tis I. ‘Tis Dózsa, and I have sore need of thee. Whoe'er thou art, if one spark of human pity

lurks in thee, speed quickly I beseech, and fetch one to shrive my soul ere yet it bursts the bars and wings its flight to realms of woe."

A little cry, a rush, and those soft arms, he had but now been dreaming of, are close about his neck while kisses sweet are pressed upon his brow.

"My father! No, you must not die; for I am come to bring you back to strength. No, no! For life we both will fight our utmost. Come, I will a light obtain, and bathe thy aching head and smooth thy pillow'd. Truly did that voice speak, when it said to me, 'Thy father has need of thee.' "

CHAPTER VII.

CHOSEN TO LEAD.

How Izolda Dózsa traversed the weary way from the quiet village of the Alföld to that far off Transylvanian hillside, or how she had subsisted during the toilsome journey, she could not well have told. With clothing in rags; feet and hands scratched, cut, bleeding and swollen, by the bushes of the forests, the stones of the roadside and the ceaseless tramping yet she had pressed forward, impelled onward by some strong incentive—she knew not what, save that a deep-rooted impression had taken possession of her mind that the father whom she had not seen for so long, now had pressing need of her; and implanted in her heart was the strong determination to reach him, no matter what or who should seek to interfere or strive to turn her back. To him she had been called by that mysterious midnight voice. She meant to go, and bent all her energies to the task. How she had found the right way or how long she had been in reaching her destination, she knew not nor cared not. Sufficient for her was the fact that she was now here; and a joy to compensate for all her hardships and trials was it that she had not come too late. The privations and pain she had endured

sank into the background as insignificant, now that she was able to minister to the comfort of the invalid, who under her tender solicitous care seemed to rally.

With the deft hand and ready tact, which only a loving woman, serving the object of her affection, possesses, Izolda had quickly transformed the invalid's surroundings. Instead of lying in a corner of the main hall, as heretofore, she had prepared his own chamber for his reception—that chamber, which since the death of his heart's mate he had not until now occupied—and the bed which had hitherto been one of pain and suffering became, under her deft manipulations, almost a couch of ease and luxury. The two male servitors were made to move with an alacrity to which they had long been strangers, while the gypsy woman's slovenly services gave place to honest endeavor to please. If any one of the trio felt the slightest inclination to rebel at the dictation of this young mistress, one glance at those piercing black eyes and the imperious poise of that shapely head was sufficient to put to flight any such base desire: (for much of the soldierly bearing and military exactingness of the father was reproduced in the child). Not that she ruled through fear, for they soon grew to take delight in the service of the grim warrior's only daughter.

Oft would Izolda sit beside the invalid's couch and stroke back gently from his brow those grizzled locks from which all caressing touch had so long been absent, while he in fond contentment would lie for hours, indulging in sweet remembrances of the dear

one long lost, and almost persuade himself that she lived again—as live indeed she did in the person of her child. She, in quiet reverie the while would recall those childish days, when here about these very hills and forests, she with the boy Michael had so often played; but with these recollections there ever came a sense of sadness and a dull ache at her heart, as she told herself that those days, now gone forever, were the sweetest she should ever know, and that the one who was her hero then (and was still, if she would but admit it), found in her his heroine no longer, but instead the common peasant girl, to be caressed or flouted at his pleasure.

Gradually Dózsa gathered strength, and before long all danger of a fatal ending to his illness was forgotten. In course of time he arose from off the bed he had never expected to leave in life, and sat in the dining-hall or kitchen, watching in quiet contentment the comings and goings of the bustling maid, who that he no longer needed her constant care, turned her attention to other matters and had begun a ceaseless rummage into all sorts of nooks and corners, bringing to light much long forgotten rubbish, a great deal of which had but short resurrection ere it perished by the flames or other ignoble agency; and out of what was chaos, soon came forth a well ordered and comforting domestic course of living. It pleased him so to watch her that 'twas almost with regret he felt his strength returning, and now had small excuse to linger longer in such unwonted ease and idleness. He went forth, encouraged by her

good example, to make without the same reforms she had within, and strove to make the best of what was left to him of field and forest, to which till now he had in truth given but scant attention. His wonted vigor had not for long returned to him, ere one day three horsemen drew rein before the entrance and sought admission, announcing that they were come upon an important mission to the most illustrious Commander Dózsa.

With his daughter by his side, Dózsa received the emissaries with stately courtesy, at the door of the main hall; and as they approached and looked curiously upon the famous captain, they could not but opine that the tall, muscular and commanding figure, with the strong face and massive forehead over which drooped a stray lock of straight iron-grey hair, and from under which piercing black eyes shot forth questioning glances, their brightness heightened by his recent fever, did by no means belie the reputation of the noted Christian champion. The fresh beauty of the maiden by his side was enhanced by the contrast to his rugged strength, and more than one glance was cast sidewise by two of the couriers while their spokesman was engaged with her father.

"We bring you greetings, noble Sir, from His Grace Archbishop Bakacs, and are charged with a most important mission from him to you."

Surprised and somewhat concerned as to what their communication from this exalted churchman might be, he nevertheless checked all appearance of unusual interest and cordially inviting them into the dining-

hall, insisted upon their refreshing themselves ere they proceeded to unfold their mission. After their wants had been liberally provided for (Izolda herself waiting upon them), he signified that he would gladly listen to the message, which the illustrious Archbishop had deigned to honor him with. Briefly, it was this :

The Holy Father at Rome was deeply grieved at the inroads which the infidel hordes of the East had of late so persistently made upon the southern and eastern confines of Europe,—encroachments which had been held in check, only by the splendid valor of the Hungarian patriots, who so effectively resisted their advance,—and alarmed, lest while the Christian princes and nobles were engrossed with the affairs, each of his own state, and each bent upon his own ambitious schemes, their subtle and ever wakeful enemy, should push forward his outposts until all was in readiness to seize a favorable opportunity to pour in his troops and overrun the whole land. He had, therefore, at the suggestion of Bakacs, decided upon the proclamation of a crusade, which it was hoped would be taken up with great zeal by those gallant warriors who had of late years proved that the Hungarian kingdom was the very bulwark of the Christian world. To the Archbishop then had been deputed the organization of this noble enterprise, which commission he had been well pleased to accept and had already pushed the undertaking well on the highway to success. Though met by strong opposition from a section of the nobles, his

counsels had prevailed in the Diet, and the call to arms—directed principally to the peasantry,—had been issued, and was meeting with ready response from all parts of the land. A suitable leader for this great enterprise was a most important factor; and, influenced by the tales of personal prowess and successful engagements with the Turks of George Dózsa, Bakacs had decided that in him was to be found the man best suited to lead the somewhat motley army which was now being assembled. He had sent, therefore, to offer the command of the expedition to him;—supreme command, subject only to his general supervision. Would he accept the trust, and justify the confidence reposed in him? The messengers were also charged with a mission to the Vayvode of Transylvania, and would now press onward in their journey, returning in the space of three days, to receive his reply.

Having despatched the messengers upon their further journey, Dózsa sat down to consider the matter. Truly it was a most flattering proposition which had been made to him. But then he had, not long since, in utter disgust at the selfish grasping spirit manifested by the nobles, vowed that he would never again lead a force against the common foe, since those who remained at their ease at home derived the greater share of the fruits of victory, and were so ungenerous as to deny even a small share of the same to those by whose exertions they had been obtained. True, this was to be a religious undertaking,—a war waged for the honor and ad-

vancement of Holy Mother Church. But then he had not been able to rid himself of the suspicion that the Church herself was to some extent in league with the nobles, in their uniform oppression of the peasants; and the very fact that this poor, downtrodden class was now looked to, to supply the material for this great army, was in itself significant. Not only must the wretched, half-starved villagers work unceasingly for their well-fed oppressors, but they must also fight and spill their blood for their further aggrandizement.

Izolda watched fearfully the struggle which she saw was taking place in her father's bosom, and breathed many a prayer that he might be relieved from the necessity of again taking the field; yet so true a daughter of the proud Magyar race was she that each prayer invariably ended with a sigh of resignation, and the resolve, that if his country and God had need of him she would not be found murmuring. To her questioning looks he, however, gave but little heed, though he was as tender as ever in his caresses. He went about with an abstracted look trying vainly within himself to come to some decision, on this question. Thus the first and the second of the three days went by without his having come to any conclusion, and the maiden was begining to have hopes that he would in the end decide to remain quietly at home with her; but late in the afternoon of the third day he walked into the hall after having been absent since the early morning, and in a state of suppressed excitement announced his purpose thus:

"Well, sweet Izolda, it would seem that fate decides that I must go and lead this peasant army against the Turks, or other oppressors. Hasten then, gentle daughter, to make what speed you may to assist me in making ready for the journey."

"Must you go my father? What has happened that you have now come to this decision, when I had hoped that you were meaning to remain here in peace with me? And what mean you by those strange word about other oppressors? Surely the Turks are the only enemies fair Hungary now has?"

"This morn I had in truth well decided to have nothing to do with this 'Bishop's war,' and to remain quietly at home with you, letting those who would reap the gain provide the sacrifice; but this day I have seen that which makes my blood boil again, and I can no longer remain at rest."

"What was it, father? Have the Turks been again marauding?"

"No, daughter. But I have seen an underling of Szapolyai, the Vayvode, use such indignity toward a peaceful peasant, that I could scarce restrain myself from smiting him to the earth upon the spot. Because, through stress of sickness, the poor wretch had not been able to produce as great a store of grain as was expected of him, the steward was wroth and seized the small share which should have remained for the support of the man's family, and when he did protest, used most shameful words and ended by striking the sick man across the face with his whip, at which cruelty a strange young gallant,—a Spaniard

by his looks—did laugh in high amusement, which seemed the more heightened when I sought to interfere and have justice done, without success.

“‘To the Vayvode with thy complaint, sirrah,’ quoth the steward, ‘and we will see whether his justice can equal my mercy.’ This knowing well that he would be upheld in any extortion.”

“It was indeed most shameful, O my father, but how had that to do with thy decision as to the Turkish crusade?” Dózsa smiled grimly.

“In this wise, child: If the nobles wish the peasants to take the field, let them take it. They, at least are no worse off to be slain by the Turks than to be starved and worked to death with their families, by these taskmasters at home. Then, once in the field, who knows, but that with a large armed force we may not be able to demand some fairer treatment at the hands of their oppressors?”

Izolda shuddered.

“Surely father, you would not think of turning your arms against them? What then would be the fate of poor, unhappy Hungary?”

“I hope it will not be necessary, sweet one. But in these troublous times, one knows not what may happen. We shall see in time. But yonder come the Archbishop’s emissaries for my answer. It may be that I shall depart with them.”

On the arrival of the messengers, Dózsa invited them to tarry for the night, so that he might make ready to accompany them, as he had decided that he would go to give his answer to the Archbishop in person; and as they sat at supper, he questioned them

closely as to who the foreign gallant now at the Vayvode's castle might be.

"He," replied their spokesman, "is Don Cardenio de Gaul, who has been with him for some time, and is now in high favor with the Vayvode. 'Tis said that he is upon a special mission from Spain; but of that I cannot say."

"Yes," spake another, "not only is he in high favor with the Vayvode, but also is he with Joanna, his daughter, and 'tis common gossip at the castle, that he has hopes of winning her hand in marriage. Though what Szapolyai would say to that, now that he aspires to ally his house with the Royal line, I would not venture to say, but there seems little doubt, but that her marriage to the young Comes Marot, which was sometime spoken of, will not be accomplished, can this Spaniard prevent it."

Izolda heard all this with a heavy heart. Her father going forth to warfare with unsettled purpose: that vile Spaniard again in her immediate neighborhood: and last, this thrust, in the talk of an impending marriage between her old playmate, Michael, and the Vayvode's daughter (though she told herself, and tried to believe that this in itself concerned her little, while the dull ache at her heart gave the lie direct to such affirmation),—all combined to depress and she was far from happy. As she said farewell to her father upon the morrow and watched his retreating form, sitting his saddle so uprightly, and towering above his companions, she had a foreboding which would not be dispelled, that evil was in store and that she had bidden him farewell, perhaps forever.

CHAPTER VIII.

HATCHING THE PLOT.

For some time after the departure of its lord, matters proceeded very quietly at "Castle Dózsa"—as it was called, though it hardly justified the name. There was indeed some attempt at fortification, and provision had been made to render it capable of defence if need arose, by providing heavy shutters for the windows, while the thick walls were pierced by long narrow loopholes. From the rear, attack was impossible, as there the walls all but touched a steep precipice which rose sheer for full two hundred feet. But there was no moat, no donjon or keep and no high parapets: on the whole the building was much after the fashion of a straggling farmhouse of more modern days. Izolda, to all outward appearance calm and free from care, followed the same daily routine, which since her father's recovery she had marked out for herself, and exacted the same attention to their various household and field duties from all as formerly. But despite all her efforts she could not banish from her mind, concern regarding the surprising terms in which her father had announced his decision to accept the command of the peasant crusade, and she was continually conscious of a dull

ache at her heart and a forboding of some impending evil to him, the meaning of which she could not fathom. Then the news, casually drawn by Dózsa from the Archbishop's emissaries, of the presence in that neighborhood of the Spanish gallant, disquieted her, so that for fear of encountering him in the forests or fields, she kept for the most part close within doors. Again the inference to be drawn from the remarks of these same couriers, that the Comes Michael was a suitor of the Vayvode's daughter—though she strove not to own it even to herself—irritated her, the more so because she frequently discovered herself musing upon the probabilities of his being received with favor by the imperious maiden, the fame of whose beauty was spread throughout the district: and though she would resolutely banish such thoughts from her, and endeavor to turn her attention to other affairs, yet invariably would they return sooner or later.

In time a message came from Dózsa, informing her that as preparations were already far advanced for the expedition and his presence therefore imperative in the camp at Buda, he would not be able to return to bid her farewell or to escort her back to Marot, before taking the field, as had been his intention. He, however, directed that she remain where she was, since in the somewhat troubled state of the country, she was probably safer there than at her uncle's, particularly now that he and her cousin Gabriel had both joined the crusade. He also bade her convey his commands to Simon C'sop, to look well to the safety

of his mistress, and take such steps as seemed expedient to guard against the depredations of any chance marauders. The girl was quite amazed at the air of importance with which Simon received this last command, and the ardor with which he set about looking to the defences, and in preparing for use the miscellaneous collection of arms and armor, which hung upon the walls of the main hall. So diligent was he that for several days he had time for but little else, and she at length felt constrained to remonstrate with him for being so over zealous.

"Why, Simon. One would think to watch thy manifold preparations, that I were some captive princess, and that doughty knights were expected to make fierce assaults upon your defences in effort to effect my release."

"Even so," returned he with an awkward attempt at gallantry, "And many an armored knight had seen your sweet face and knew of your being here, I doubt not that we should be called upon to fight in your defence:" then added with a hint at darker meaning, "Who knows? We may have use enough for our pikes before the summer be over."

Not content with getting the weapons in order, Simon proceeded to organize a sort of guard from the few retainers about the place, and much to the amusement of his master's daughter, strove to teach them some military movements and evolutions, of evidently his own conception. However, as she watched his proceedings from day to day, amusement gave place to uneasiness, and at length she

became thoroughly alarmed, as she saw that his little company gradually increased until he had many peasants from the surrounding district enrolled, and some half a hundred or more would at one time gather at his call. In fact she began to fear that they were bent upon proceeding to take part in the crusade, and that some day she would find herself forsaken and alone in the great house, save for the companionship of the decrepit old gypsy woman.

"Why do you do this, Simon? What does it all mean?" she asked again and again; but little satisfaction was to be gotten from his answer.

"It is best to be prepared. We know not but that some of those knights you spoke of, may ere long be knocking at our gates and striving to force an entrance; or, what is still more important, we may wish to force an entrance into some castle to free a princess ourselves."

Mystified and uneasy at his peculiar answers, but powerless to put a stop to his doings, the lonely maid, now thoroughly convinced that some mischief was brewing, set herself to watch closely the actions of this man and his companions with a view of discovering his ultimate intentions. She had not long to wait. One day, a month or more after the departure of her father, she became conscious of an unusual excitement among Simon's band, and as the day wore on the peasants from the neighboring estates began to congregate in the vicinity of the house, until there were more than double the number that had ever been there before at one time, while

their self-appointed captain busied himself rushing from group to group, and talking for a moment or two with each new arrival as he came up. Late in the afternoon, Simon, followed by some half dozen others, led the way without ceremony into the main hall, and proceeded to hold a council of war. Izolda, busying herself in her own sitting-room, just off the hall, with the door ajar, was not long in understanding the full purport of the project in hand, which was no less than to march that night against the castle of the Vayvode, which they hoped to take by surprise and putting all the inmates to the sword, to fire and reduce to ruins the entire structure. The Vayvode, they had learned was away from home, and, unsuspicions of danger, but a weak garrison was in charge, while—what effectually guaranteed the success of their enterprise,—one of the conspirators was employed within the castle and was pledged, upon hearing a given signal, to raise the portcullis and lower the draw-bridge for their entrance: this once effected, the task of subduing the unprepared defenders would be easily accomplished.

As she listened to the unfolding of this diabolical plot, Izolda seemed frozen with horror. She gasped for breath, while cold like unto death crept over her limbs and body. For several minutes she sat as one paralyzed, then, as the power of movement returned, her first almost unconquerable impulse was to rush forth and scream; but by a supreme effort of will she resisted it and controlled herself sufficiently to think the matter out. 'Surely there was here the

result of the plotting of some crazed brain; doubtless, that of Simon, whose actions lately had certainly been far from reasonable. But of this she could not be certain, as ever and anon a strange, yet familiar, voice rose higher than the rest, and seemed to advocate still greater lengths of wanton injury and destruction than the others were prepared for. However, it mattered little who was the maniac, what was she to do was the question. Doubtless, if she went in among them and calmly forbade the prosecution of the enterprise, the reason of the majority would return to them and the danger would be averted. Oh, how she felt her weakness and longed for her father's strong arm to lean upon, or—and she blushed at the thought—if Michael Dobozy were only here with that strong arm which had put the Spaniard to such confusion, what a relief it would be. But she was alone; and brave, true maid that she was, hesitated no longer, but strode into the midst of the conspirators with firm tread, determined to do her utmost to turn them from their fell purpose.

“What means all this, Simon C’sop? Must needs turn thy master’s hall into an armory while he is away? And what is all this talk of treason and murder I hear? Truly, you be all beside yourselves. What means it, sirrah?”

“No. We be not beside ourselves, Izolda Dózsa,” answered the voice she had marked before, and surprised, she turned to see the village swineherd of Marot, whom she remembered as giving such a heated harangue to the villagers, that night when she

had danced the csárdas with Don Cardenio, "but we are at length to make a bold stroke for freedom, led on to victory by that peerless soldier, George Dózsa, thy father."

The maiden started in vague terror.

"My father. No! He would not for one moment consent to such dastardly conduct."

"Yea. But it is even so," returned Stephen. "He has at last decided, and is even now I trust, leading that vast army of peasants (which the foolish nobles, in their simplicity believed would be led against the Turks), against their oppressors—to burn and to destroy, to chastise and to kill, until the fiends who have for so long oppressed us, will accede to our just demands and proclaim that in Hungary all men are brothers, are of equal grade and shall leave us in peaceable possession of the spoils we shall have already taken. Of a truth a glorious day is about to dawn for this most glorious Magyar race, and the name of thy father shall go down to future generations, as the liberator of his country, the breaker of the thraldom, which has for so long rendered dead the limbs of the young giants of this land. Daughter of our most noble leader, I salute thee," and flinging himself upon his knees at her feet, the fiery orator strove to kiss her hand. But she drew back.

"No. No! You mistake my father. While he may be willing to do his utmost to persuade and even to use force to secure better treatment for the peasantry, yet would he not sanction the raiding of castles and the shedding of innocent blood. Touch

not my hand, while thine is so ready to engage in such lawless purposes."

" Nay, nay! 'Tis thou that mistaketh thy father. He, indeed, is too wise a general to enquire too closely into the means which are employed to gain victory for his cause: and while he would perhaps wish harm to none of the Vayvode's household, yet am I certain that when he learns that such a nest of the oppressors hath been destroyed, he will be far from displeased with those, who have ventured such a bold deed in the fight for liberty."

The poor girl was silenced and stood for several minutes, shuddering and gazing helplessly about her, then turned and retired once more to her own apartment, dazed as one who waketh suddenly walking in his sleep, and sat down to wrestle with the thoughts which came thronging into her brain. No. She could not believe that her father, so brave and true, would have aught but the fiercest denunciations for so vile a crime as this night attack upon the wholly unsuspecting and unprepared inmates of the castle. Oh, that he were here to prevent it. But then—horrible thought—Stephen the swineherd had declared that her father was now in open rebellion and was preparing to lead the army of the crusade against the established authority of the kingdom. Could this be true? A month before she would have been ready to pledge her soul that such a statement was utterly false; but now—those significant words, which he had spoken just before his departure, rang again in her ears like a veritable knell. Her father, a traitor

to his king! There was madness in the thought. In time she grew calmer, and soon in thought was seeking to palliate the offense of him, whom from childhood days she had been wont to look upon as an oracle,—as one who would always do the right. And why was he not right in this? The question rang out sharp and clear, almost it were as though some one had spoken it in her ear. It surely was possible that he might be. She, who had lived the life of a simple village maid for so long, knew full well what burdens and wrongs the peasants had to bear, what privations they were called upon to endure at the mere caprice of their masters, the nobles, and what indignities—yea insults—were at times heaped wantonly upon their wives and daughters. (Had she not but recently experienced something of this herself?) It could not be that God designed that they should continue in this despised condition forever. Surely His avenging arm would be stretched out sooner or later, and perhaps—who knew?—her father might be His chosen instrument to avenge the weak upon their oppressors. But this assault on the castle,—could that be right? Well, as the swineherd had maintained, it would be aiding the cause of liberty. Doubtless the Vayvode's retainers would be taken completely by surprise and perhaps the peasants might have a bloodless victory. It certainly would be a considerable triumph, to subdue the fortress of such an important personage as the ruler of all Transylvania. Her resolve was taken. She would return to the hall, express approval of the brave ad-

venture the peasants had determined upon, but urge them to avoid bloodshed as far as possible, and to treat all captives with consideration. As she came to this determination, however, she also became conscious of what had before escaped her,—that the loud talking had ceased, had, indeed, for some time—and upon trying the door of her room, she found that it had been securely fastened from without. The conspirators had evidently feared she might endeavor to convey a warning to their victims.

With the discoverey that she was a prisoner, there also came to Izolda, a realization that the hopes she had entertained of preventing violence, were but vain. Once their passions roused, it was difficult to foresee what excesses the hot-headed rabble might not be betrayed into. In a frenzy, she threw herself against the door and strove to burst it open; but it was as a wall unmoved beneath her weak efforts. Again and again she returned to the assault upon the unyielding barrier with like result, and at length sank exhausted upon the floor, in an agony of tears. Suddenly a new thought flashed across her brain and she grew calm again. Why should she grieve thus? Stupid creature! Were not these peasants, in carrying out their wicked plot, serving her also? Was not Don Cardenio, the Spanish brute, who had sought to so cruelly misuse her, now an inmate of the Vayvode's household? And if he fell a victim to the rabble's fury, would she not be most justly avenged? —And still another thought. Had not the couriers on their return from thence let fall the information, that

the Vayvode's daughter was the possible bride of Comes Michael of Marot? How it had stung her to the quick at the time. For strive to disguise it as she might, she could no longer blind herself to the fact that Michael Dobozy was the idol of her heart, and that she loved him passionately—the more passionately since she knew that he could never be hers, that there was no answering passion for her in his heart; rather indeed he despised her as the plaything of the gay gallant, from whose unwelcome attentions he had for the time delivered her. But he would not be permitted to lavish that love, which she so coveted, upon this other. Long ere he came hither again, the one he came to see would be cold in death, and thus would she be victorious over her rival, and that without the movement of a finger on her part. She felt guilty at the thought till in time her better nature again asserted itself, and she was dwelling in horror upon the tragedy about to ensue. Why should she desire the death of this gentle maiden, who had never done her harm and why should she delight to think that pain would be inflicted upon him whom she loved so dearly, though in secret? Better far were it if she,—poor, outcast, unloved, forsaken it seemed even by her own father,—could die in the place of this innocent one, and could restore her unharmed into the arms of her lover. Would it not be blissful thus to die, with the consciousness of having conferred happiness upon him? Would that she were able to do such a deed for her love's sake! She started up. At least it was yet

possible for her to avert the spilling of this innocent blood by giving timely warning. But alas! She is again crushed by the cruel recollection that she is a prisoner and helpless. With a despairing cry she sinks once more to the floor and for long lies in a dull leaden stupor.

CHAPTER IX.

WARRING COUNSELORS.

In the royal castle at Buda some half dozen men have met for counsel. As we glance about the circle and mark the faces, we see that here are gathered those, in whose hands rests largely the fate of poor distracted Hungary, and though we be but indifferent readers of the human countenance, yet even a tyro can here discern sufficient to do anything but allay his fears as to the future of that land; so much of self-seeking and suspicious distrust of his fellow being plainly portrayed in each, accentuated at the present moment by the strong undercurrent of anxiety predominating all, and which, it is soon evident, has prompted the present meeting.

Stephen Telegedy, the Treasurer, is now addressing his confreres, and he does so in strong terms, speaking rapidly and distinctly with much show of pent up passion, as one so fully persuaded of the justice of his position, that he needs not to weigh his words before speaking. His remarks are addressed directly to the one who sits opposite to him—a tall commanding figure in clerical attire of faultless elegance, the insignia of which proclaims him as the Archbishop, none other than Thomas Bakacs the

instigator of the peasants' crusade. The mask of meekness and humility, which he habitually assumes in public, has for the nonce been dropped, as he is pricked to the quick by the cutting words of the Treasurer, and he sits revealed as the true man,—a cunning, plotting, self-seeking, stubborn and ambitious prelate. He has played high stakes in this venture, for something,—what, none but himself knows—and he is not ready to admit that he has lost; but far from it, he hopes in the present panicky state of the king and nobles, to gain rich gifts and concessions for the church and himself,—especially the latter. Accordingly he listens to the sentences of the Treasurer with growing anger.

" You, Most Worthy Archbishop, are the cause of the present danger, which menaces the kingdom. You, to serve your own ends, have called together this great rabble which now camps without the gates, snarling and quarreling like a pack of half starved wolves, who wait but the word to spring at our throats and tear us to pieces. Pity was it indeed, that Thomas Bakacs had not succeeded in getting himself elected Pope, rather than that he should vent his disappointment by delivering us over to the tender mercies of those, who from nursing the fancied wrongs of centuries, have become our traditional enemies. I need not remind you all," he continued, turning from one to the other, " how I fought this mad scheme in the Diet, and boldly stated my conviction that the glory of God was not intended, neither the destruction of the infidels desired, but

rather the advancement of this schemer, who failing of one thing has now set out in the quest of a cardinal's hat or some such bauble, in which pursuit we, unwillingly enough, are become his puppets. It is but justice that he who has led us to the brink of this precipice, should now do his utmost to prevent our tumbling over. He should be made to at once dispatch this mob of curs upon its errand, leading them himself if needs must, and small blame to them if they should be moved to devour him upon the journey."

Absolute silence followed this fiery speech of Telegedy, for the space of several minutes, during which all eyes were turned upon the Archbishop, with a curious, half-fearful expression: save in the case of the other cleric present, (the Bishop of Csand), who could not disguise the satisfaction which this attack upon his superior had given him; for he, too, had his ambitions, which had more than once been interfered with by his more successful rival. Bakacs at length rose to reply, and fixing his eyes with a vindictive glare upon the Treasurer, commenced:

"Most Illustrious Lords:—"

But he spoke no further. At that moment the door was thrown open wide and, "His Majesty, the King," was announced.

Uladislaus, the nominal ruler of Hungary, who now enters the room, is not at all a commanding figure. Not that he is dwarfed in stature or deficient in intellect, but the weakness and indecision of his character is openly marked upon his countenance, while

the continued ill-health which has long afflicted him, imparts a listlessness to all his actions, which goes far toward encouraging the effrontery which at times characterizes the proceedings of certain of his ministers.

"You desired our attention Sir Palatine," (He addresses Stephen Báthory, the present occupant of that high office), "that we might advise in the disposal of some matters of weighty importance to our realm. Let it not we beseech you, occupy over much of our time, for we are but this moment come from the holding of a most important conference with our beloved Queen, regarding the State Ball so shortly to be held, and we would return thither ere many minutes. Tell us now, O learned Chief Justice,"—he continues turning suddenly to another of the group,—"'tis surely not again of this wretched peasant affair, that you desire us to trouble our already too much wearied brain."

Thus appealed to, Stephen Verboczy, the afterward famous jurist, makes answer.

"Your Most Gracious Majesty, it is indeed deplorable that we should be compelled to distract your attention, for even so short a time, from such important considerations to a matter of merely passing interest, (This was said with ill concealed sarcasm, which was however, entirely lost upon the poor weak monarch), but the congregation of this vast army of the peasantry so close to your capital, has alarmed many of the more timid of the subjects of your realm; so much so, that they are even now crying out to the

Palatine to at once dispatch them upon their praiseworthy crusade against the nation's enemies; and since the greater part of those who have answered to the call have now reached the camp at Pesth, and the time is most opportune for a descent upon the Turks, we do deem the demand of the people most just and right, therefore do but now discuss acceding thereto: and in this, there hath arisen some friendly difference as to whom should fall the honor of conducting forth this noble array as it enters upon its glorious mission. It hath been said by many that to the noble Archbishop, and to none other, should fall this coveted privilege. But our meek and generous prelate, with that unselfishness and humbleness of spirit, which are such marked adornments of his character, would gladly forego his right, and having performed all the arduous labors of proclaiming and organizing this great enterprise, would now efface himself, and having placed the leadership in the hands of that great and illustrious soldier, George Dózsa, would leave entirely to his discretion the conduct of future operations. The keeper of Your Majesty's public purse, however, likes not to see his noble and well-beloved friend thus sacrifice himself, and argues that it is due, not only to him as the instigator of the glorious expedition, but also to the populace, who put such well-deserved faith in him and delight to pay him honor, that he should personally lead forth on its journey, this vast array of patriots, even though he later leave them with his priestly blessing, and

resign the active conduct of affairs to their brave commander. The controversy between these two dear friends seems hard of settlement for the noble Palatine, who hesitates to take upon himself to pronounce a decision between the two, each of whom he holds in such high esteem that he would fain believe his opinion to be just and right. In this dilemma, he has with our hearty approval, deemed it well to leave to your Majesty's well matured wisdom the pronouncement in the point at variance being fully persuaded that the decision will be wise and righteous. Speak I not the matter rightly, O Noble Palatine?"

During this harangue, the wily Verboczy looked first at the Archbishop, then at the Treasurer and again at the Palatine, concealing under a bland smile, the satisfaction he felt at thus covertly stabbing, each in turn, the three whom he more than detested, and who in turn likewise detested him, while they cordially hated one another. They, meantime, though inwardly writhing beneath his sarcasm, strove to keep up an outward calmness, contenting themselves with eyeing one another viciously, as he repeatedly referred to the "close friendship" existing between them. As he ceased speaking with a direct appeal to him, Stephen Báthory had perforce, to make show of accepting his statement of the position of affairs, and beg of the king to adjudicate between the two "friendly" disputants. Uladislaus was relieved to find that no weightier counsel was desired of him, and

failed utterly to perceive that the Chief Justice but mocked him as well as his other advisers.

“Dobze.” (It is well), he remarked sententiously, “The matter is of ready settlement. To you, Thomas Bakacs, who were the originator of this holy expedition, should certainly fall the lot of putting the army in motion. See to it at once, my noble Archbishop; the sooner they are at the throats of the Infidel dogs the better. Dobze, Dobze. We will now return to our Queen and matters of more pressing import;” and the puppet king retired.

With one accord all now turned to the wrathful Archbishop, to learn what he would say, never doubting but that a fierce explosion would take place. But concealing his real feelings under that mask of habitual calmness, which he so well knew how to assume at will, the emulator of Peter the Hermit said briefly.

“The will of the king must be obeyed, and if my poor weak efforts can be of any avail to quiet the fears of the faint-hearted advisors of His Majesty, and relieve them of the presence of this ‘Army of the Lord,’ which they stand so much in dread of, I shall deem myself fortunate in having served them. I shall at once betake myself to the camp without the gates of Pesth, and trust that to-morrow’s sun shall not set ere the onward movement shall have begun. As to the base designs which you have imputed to me, Comes Telegedy—I shall not attempt to defend myself from your accusations, since it is

the portion of those who would serve their God and church, to be mocked and reviled by those who are in opposition to the progress of that church. Wilt thou of Temesvar deign to accompany me? And thou, Nicolas Csáky, pray attend our movements." And thus without further parley, the conference came to an end.

CHAPTER X.

THE MOMENTOUS DECISION.

Outside the city of Pesth all is life and activity, for here is assembled a mighty concourse, come together from all parts of the kingdom. Here, over there, away yonder, yes, as far as the eye can reach in every direction, are to be seen groups of men, rough and uncouth looking for the most part—though not all—gathered about their camp-fires, some sitting, others lolling upon the earth, while others again are busily engaged in certain culinary operations over the fires, for it is approaching sundown and the evening meal is that which now commands the attention of each individual of this vast array. An army it is in very truth, being that which George Dózsa has been called from his far Transylvanian home, to lead in its projected advance against the Turks. A crusade it is called, and the term is perhaps fitting in more ways than one. Certainly if likeness to that first great array marshalled by Peter the Hermit, entitles these to the name of “Crusaders,” then they are rightly called, for these hastily gathered, half-armed—yes, half-clad groups, are the 16th Century counterpart of Peter’s rabble. The women and children, who formed so large a proportion of that throng, are not

wanting here either, though the men largely predominate. These also are as utterly ignorant of the trials and difficulties of the path they have chosen to tread, as were those of the earlier centuries, and many now, as then, have other motives in taking the cross, than a consuming desire for the extermination of infidels and a fervid religious zeal. Many there are, in despair and utter weariness of the long struggle for bare existence, amid the exactions and burdens placed upon them by those in whose power fate seemed to have inexorably fixed them, until this call of Bakacs to arm for the fray seemed to come as an "Open Sesame" to lead them out into unexpected freedom. Freedom? we say. Yes, freedom. For the restraint of being at the beck and call of their leader, is extreme liberty compared to the thraldom and slavery of their every-day existence. Some there are who hint darkly at a greater freedom to be obtained by means of this very crusade, and some of these can even now be seen moving about the camp among the different groups, stopping here to converse awhile, and there to make remarks, which they are not overly anxious to limit as to auditors, about the strength which is here in the hands of the peasantry, and which, if judiciously used, might extort greater benefits from their masters and tyrants, the Hungarian nobles, than from Turkish Pashas.

Truly this is a strange scene, and as evening comes on apace and twilight falls, it becomes almost weird and unearthly. The varied figures which are thrown into relief by the bright flames from the hundreds of

camp-fires, the babel of sound—now the monotonous murmur of many tongues in conversation, again the song as one attempts to amuse his fellows by his vocal accomplishments, while close at hand voices may be raised in loud altercation as some chance dispute rouses opponents, and not far away the discord from some extemporized musical instrument is drowned in the loud laughter of a knot who hold high revel close by. And now the meal having been disposed of, by this and that fire, a circle of dancing forms grow fantastic, in their whirlings and gyrations as the figures of the csárdas are performed to the time of some accompanying musician, while from far off in the darkness in an unexpected quarter comes a plaintive and sweet strain as an unseen singer warbles his heart's song, in the soft cadence of the Magyar tongue, the charm of which is rudely broken perhaps by the harsher and more guttural notes of a Czech warrior near by. Tents are pitched close to, and reflected in many a firelight, and rude shelters beside many more; but by far the greater portion of these forty thousand peasants, stretch themselves beneath the stars, when seeking for repose.

Threading our way in and out among these various groups, strange and varied sights pass before our eyes, and stranger still might be in store, did we exercise the privilege of looking within each shelter as we pass by; but refraining, we pass them all, until we approach a tent, larger than the rest, and from which a bright light shines steadily, and entering we find ourselves in the presence of George Dózsa, the

commander of this motley array. Here then is the man in whose hand rests, for the moment, the fate of his country,—yea, even of much of western Europe. Prove faithful to the trust which has been reposed in thee, and the fanatical Turk may be pressed back into his Asiatic desert, whence he has emerged and striven to overrun, with fire and sword, the lands which affect allegiance to that Christ, whose claim to Divine Sonship he derides, and whose worship he would by violence, wipe from off the face of the earth. If thou wilt but uphold the past record of Hungarian arms, the mosque shall not be permitted to rear its glittering dome or the muezzin's call to prayer resound through once Christian lands: but, listen to the treason, which ere this, subtle advisers have striven to whisper—nay, shriek—into thine ears, prove recreant to thy trust, and a century of Eastern darkness will envelop thy beloved Hungary; and her people shall groan for ages under burdens even greater than those they now complain of.

Seated and standing about the tent, are some dozen or more of his subordinate officers, several by their dress and jaunty carriage, showing evidence of more or less military training, but the majority show very plainly that they are not in their natural sphere, while some can at once be recognized as peaceful traders—inhabitants of the city. One, more noticeable than any other both by his demeanor and dress, is plainly a priest: he is in fact Dózsa's chief lieutenant, Lawrence Meszaros. All at the moment have their attention directed to one, who, standing

just inside the entrance of the tent, is vehemently delivering himself to their chief, and it needs not the skill of a mind reader, to learn that his sentiments receive the hearty approval of the greater portion of his auditors. "Consider, O Noble Captain! Has not kind fortune, or more truthfully, the good God, Himself, in wisdom, Who at times does make His enemies to lay snares for their own entanglement, placed here in your hands the means to accomplish the deliverance of the people from the iron hand of oppression, which has held them in such cruel bondage, ever growing more burdensome, for so many years? Is it not plain that to you is entrusted an enterprise, more urgent, more humane and more noble than the leadership of a dozen crusades? Tell me, O my brethren"—turning, with ready tact, to the company—"What shall it profit us, if we bend our energies to do battle against the Turks, who at worst are distant foes and do not now menace the country, and having succeeded in overcoming them, (if we be so fortunate, which I sometimes doubt, for they are many of them mighty warriors) and many of our number having sacrificed their lives in the effort, those of us who are left have nothing to look forward to but a return to the abject slavery, which has of late become so unbearable to all who have one spark of manhood remaining in them? While, on the other hand, here are we some forty thousand strong, all united in the consciousness of the justice of our cause: 'twere but play, almost, to turn upon our taskmasters, and putting to good account the

arms, which they have so opportunely furnished us with, compel them to adjust our wrongs and by a complete remodeling of the laws and government, contrive that from henceforth we shall share with them the benefits from which we are now excluded; while they shall bear their fair share of the burdens from which they are now entirely exempt. What say you? Must not our commander, in justice to us, as well as to himself, now play the man, and listening to the cries of our children, who appeal to him, throw down the gauntlet to the Hungarian noble rather than to the Turkish Sultan?"

A murmur of assent ran round the tent as the speaker paused, and all eyes were fixed upon Dózsa, who, after a pause makes answer, which from the hesitancy with which he speaks gives evidence that he is wavering.

"That which you say, brave John, has much of truth in it; but consider, that what you advise means flagrant rebellion against the king, and also that each one of us would have to prove traitor to the vow, which we have taken, to prosecute this crusade and to draw our swords only in the cause of the Cross. Surely, Heaven would not smile upon an army of rebels and oath-breakers, and our plans would all come to naught."

Again the other speaks, and his zeal and energy are in marked contrast to the indecision of the commander.

"As to the King, we shall be fighting for his liberty, as much as for our own; for these bloodsuckers have

reduced him to almost as base slavery as ourselves, until he has become but a puppet in the hands of those, who for the time do manage to grasp the leading strings,—and as for our vows: have we not here the good priest, Meszaros, to absolve us from them? He will tell us truly, that a vow taken in a false cause is of none effect, and this crusade that we have embarked in, is most utterly false, aiming more at the advancement of the ambitions of one man—the Archbishop who preaches it,—than any benefit for the Church he professes to serve. Say I not truly, my true-hearted Lawrence?”

The soldier priest hastened to give his unqualified assent to all that the fiery orator had said, but was interrupted by the parting of the hangings of the tent and the entrance of the Archbishop, accompanied by the Comes of Temes and the Bishop of Csand. All hastened to make due obeisance and remained standing while Dzsa proffered him a seat, and enquired to what cause he was indebted for the high honor of his visit. Without loss of time Bakacs proceeded to the fulfilling of the task, which had been pressed upon him at the council.

“I come, my brave Captain, to remind you that a zealous soldier of the Cross, such as I have been led to believe you are, should be up and doing. You have now, gathered here beneath your banners, a vast army of forty thousand sworn crusaders, who I am sure, must be all impatient for the time to come, when they shall be led forth to face the foe. Then why do you hesitate? The good citizens of Pesth

are already beginning to grumble at the prolonged delay, especially as it is no light matter to feed such a great concourse as this, and they find the duty most burdensome. Also you, as an experienced general, know that it is not wise to allow your enemies time for preparation to meet your advance, and these Turks, who have proved themselves such fanatical fighters, should not be given any opportunity to plan machinations against the Army of the Lord. But, it may be that I am speaking hastily, and that you are even now in readiness to name to me the hour in which you purpose striking your tents and marching forth against these desecrators of the Sepulchre. Is it even so?"

Inwardly chafing at the cutting remarks of the Archbishop, Dózsa makes prompt reply, quite free from the hesitancy, which was so marked in his utterance but a short time before.

" You speak much that is indeed truth, Most Excellent Sir. But I would humbly point out that the soldier, who is about to set out upon a campaign, has many preparations to make that those unacquainted with the art of war think naught of. Truly, I have here about me a great army of men, but they still lack much that is necessary to equip them for the field. The arms provided are by no means sufficient to furnish all properly, and I cannot ask men to proceed against a courageous and well-armed foe like the Turk, without providing them with the means to oppose him."

" Arms, Sir! And do you talk to me of arms, who

have already delivered to you such great quantities procured at mine own expense, beside those which have been furnished by order of the Diet? What further would you have? Do you, in truth, expect to lead forth an army of peasants armed cap-á-pie? A brave showing, surely, some of your brave warriors would make. Come; enough of such vain parley. When are we to report that you will be ready to take the field?" Dózsa's brow contracted, and his eye had an ominous glitter during this last speech, but he controlled himself and answered coldly.

"Even so then. We will expect no further arms for the prosecution of this enterprise; but before I lead forth these half-armed companies to be slaughtered by the infidels, there is another matter which I must submit to Your Grace, and to you also, noble Comes. Since I have been honored by the command of this army of the crusade, it has come to mine ears, indeed it has been openly told to me, that the peasants do not expect to march—cannot be persuaded to march—against the foe, until they have the assurance that the burdens under which they have labored for so many years, will be lightened. They are fully agreed that as they have until now borne all the burdens, while you and your friends have received all the privileges, that some concessions should be vouchsafed to them ere they take up still another burden, and expose themselves to death and their families to want, while you favored ones still remain at home, to quietly reap all the benefits of their hardships. Some answer must be made to their demands, ere I can hope to move the army."

The cheeks of the trio who listened perceptibly paled at these bold words of the crusader captain and after a brief whispered consultation with the Comes of Temes, the Archbishop again spoke.

"A bold request and right boldly put, and it is perhaps not without justice that the peasants so reason. But you may be safe, brave sir, in announcing to your followers that the nobles, pleased at the true loyalty shown by so many brave peasants, will be most gracious, and will in fact make earnest representations to the King that he ought, as far as possible to lighten the burden of taxes, which rests so heavily upon them. But hasten you now to arrange for an immediate advance against the foe."

"Not so, my crafty Churchman," comes the quick response. "We are not to be bought by such cheap promises as that. Right well do you know that it is not from the hand of the King that the peasants suffer such heavy exactions; but from the nobles, who have shorn the monarch of his power for their own enrichment. No. The Diet must be summoned, and acts of relief passed before a soldier moves from this camp." Bakacs became white with anger.

"What! You dare to dictate thus to me! Be careful what you do. Once more I ask you,—and I warn you that the ban of the Church will be upon you, if you refuse,—will you lead this army forth upon the high mission assigned to it by the Holy Father? Pause, ere you answer rashly."

"Yea," put in the Comes of Temes. "Show thy-

self worthy of thy reputation as a brave and prudent warrior, and weigh well the words of the Archbishop, before doing that which will most assuredly bring disaster and ruin upon thee and all thy followers.” Firm and decided came the answer.

“I will not, except on the terms offered.”

“O, wretched man, thy soul’s damnation be upon thine own head, for thou hast sinned most wilfully. May the curse of God rest upon thee and all thine house. Thou art forever cut off from the Church, and her sacraments are denied thee. And may any, who in defiance of this solemn edict of Most Holy Church, aid or succor thee, be even as thou art,—an outcast from her bosom. To you, O Lawrence Meszaros, I commit the task of seeing that this edict is observed and of absolving all officers and soldiers from further allegiance to this man.” Then, turning to the assembled leaders. “Are there none of you here present, who can persuade your captain from rushing to his everlasting destruction?”

For answer all rose and silently ranged themselves alongside of George Dózsa, who with a smile of triumph, once more addressed the Archbishop.

“You refused to listen to my warning and now the die is cast, and that by yourself. Henceforth, the nobles may expect no allegiance from the peasants. Out of my tent and camp, thou dog of a perjured priest, lest I serve thee as thou deservest, and lay violent hands upon thee:” and striding to the entrance, he raised the flap and fairly drove the august trio forth into the darkness, and then turned to take

fresh counsel with his followers, as to what should be done under the changed conditions.

Bakacs and his companions went forth into the darkness in no very pleasant frame of mind, and as they strode through the now quieted camp, it seemed as though the elements had roused themselves in sympathy with the fierce human passions, which ruled in the breasts of the participants, in the momentous conference just terminated, and which held full sway in the hearts of so many of those in that silent host. The wind had risen from a gentle breeze to almost a gale, coming and going in violent gusts, which seemed about to sweep everything before them, and against which the three cloaked figures had difficulty in making progress,—were indeed more than once almost lifted off their feet,—while dark angry clouds drove low across the broken sky, which was ever and anon lighted up by fitful flashes of lightning of intense brilliancy, followed by hoarse mutterings of thunder. Well might one imagine that Heaven's artillery was being hurried up for action and, directed by an angry God, was about to pour its batteries with deadly effect upon the sleeping camp in just retribution for the contemplated outrage and sacrilege of its commander:—and better far had it been for all, had this fancy been indeed the reality, and the whole vast throng been swept at once into eternity, before being permitted to embark in that course, the dire effects of which are felt by the nation until this day. Rain was also falling, not in a steady downpour, but in driving sheets of water, which penetrated to the skin, despite

all protection, and threatened to turn portions of the camp ground into small lakes. The fires, which a short time since had burned so brightly and cheerily, were now extinguished, and were marked only by the numerous heaps of sodden cinders and partially consumed sticks. Here and there a knot of half clad figures, like a swarm of angry bees called forth from their nest by the attack upon it of some intruder, could be seen in a state of excited activity, striving to right a tent or shelter, which had gone down before one of the sudden blasts which swept down upon them. Truly, an uninviting and dispiriting scene as compared to that same camp some three or four hours earlier.

But the warring elements without, received little heed from the company within Dózsa's tent, who now that the die had been cast, were busily engaged in mapping out a plan for immediate action. A marked change had taken place in the chief's manner, since the interview with Bakacs. Before, he was vacillating and undecided, altogether a source of anxiety, and withal a very uncertain quantity, to those who were urging the employment of the power placed in his hands, for the coercion of their oppressors. But now he is all animation and enters heartily into the arrangements, impatiently leading, where before he had been most unwillingly dragged. Lawrence Meszaros smiles approvingly aside, in answer to the questioning looks bent upon him by more than one of the conspirators; for he, better versed than they, perhaps, in the workings of the human mind, well

understood that the relief to Dózsa, in knowing that he was now definitely committed to open rebellion, must indeed be great, even though such a dire bolt as the ecclesiastical ban had already dropped at his feet.

The storm had passed, and the dawn of another day was about to break ere that company dispersed, having arranged for the immediate commencement of that campaign of blood and fire, which was to so cruelly lacerate devoted Hungary, and leave its impress upon the land and its people, for centuries to follow. Poor, misguided, short-sighted and betrayed humanity; ever flying in the face of that beneficent Providence, which, if but allowed to have free course, would right all wrongs and free fallen humanity of so much which now distresses and degrades it!

CHAPTER XI.

AN HEROIC FAILURE.

Izolda remained for some time sunk in blackest despair. Suddenly she sprang to her feet with a cry. What was that her father had said to her upon the morning of his departure? In her grief and anxiety at his going, she had paid but little heed, and until now had utterly forgotten his words.

"My daughter, I trust that all will be well with you during my absence, and that naught but peace and quiet will be your lot until my return; but, in case any great danger should arise, *push the sixth panel from the southeast corner of your mother's sitting room off the main hall*. There you will find safety." Why, this was the very room. What could he have meant? She would soon discover what. Rushing to the eastern wall, which also formed the outside wall of the building, close up against the high cliff before spoken of, she quickly found the panel he had mentioned; for this room, unlike any other in the house, was far more pretentious in adornment, the walls being panelled to the ceiling, richly carved and showing evidence of much skilled workmanship. At first the girl made no impression upon the panel; but as she struck it with her clenched hand it gave forth

a hollow sound. In frantic haste she threw herself against it, and was rewarded by feeling it give beneath her weight, though as she drew back to regain her balance, it seemed as immovable as ever. Encouraged by this measure of success, she returned to the attack, and hurled her body with all her strength against the wall, with the result that it yielded so suddenly as to throw her upon the floor beyond, while the door, or panel, as soon as relieved of her weight, closed behind her with an unseen spring.

She seemed in utter darkness at first, but gradually her eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, and she saw that she was in a chamber almost as large as that which she had just quitted. Though long disused, it was evident that it had been prepared with a view of concealment in time of danger. The greater part of the room was an artificial cavern, hollowed out from the side of the hill, but from the face of the cliff to the outside wall of the house was some eighteen inches, which space had been cunningly closed on either side by shrubs and vines, which years of growth had formed into a natural and impenetrable barrier: the tendrils and leaves of the vines were also entwined overhead, but some rays of light struggled through, so that a semi-twilight prevailed. After the first surprise, a feeling of great disappointment came to Izolda. This was indeed a place of refuge, but in the present difficulty it was of no assistance. She turned to retrace her steps, but was arrested by the sound of voices upon the other side of the partition.

What was being said she could not discern, but it was quite evident that some one, coming to seek her, had found her flown and had called a second to take counsel as to her strange disappearance. It would never do for her to re-enter that room now, and so disclose the secret chamber, the existence of which, she doubted not, was known to none other but her father. She stood for what seemed hours, listening to hear some sound indicating their departure, but they appeared to be in no hurry to return to their companions. She chafed for some time at the loitering, then rejoiced in it, as the idea occurred to her, that perhaps these were not overly keen for the project in hand, and were therefore not displeased to think that possibly she had managed to escape them and given warning of the intended assault. Possibly the fear that she had, might lead to the abandonment of the project. But she was soon undeceived, for a third now joined them and the voices were raised so that she, (her hearing sharpened by the excitement), could hear the careless laugh with which Simon,—for the new comer was he,—received the news of her disappearance.

“Well, she has doubtless stowed herself about the castle somewhere; but it matters little, for she could not pass through our sentries at the foot of the ravine, to reach the Vayvode’s castle. Everything has been made safe,” and the laugh sounded most hard and brutal to the poor maiden so sorely distressed.

As the voices died away, she reached out her hand to open the secret door, but could nowhere feel any-

thing, whereof to lay hold. In nowise troubled by this she sought to push it forward, but met with solid resistance, and then recollecting that each panel of the wall was flanked by heavy pillars, which formed the sides of a gothic arch, springing from the floor and uniting at the ceiling: the panel rested solidly against these and must be opened outwardly, if at all. Again she examined it and strove to find some method of opening it; but the smooth blank wall resisted her every effort. Most skilfully had this door been devised and the secret of it she did not possess. She became alarmed. What was she to do? She was now a prisoner most secure, and how to make her escape she knew not. At first her feeling was of vexation only, but gradually there dawned upon her a realization of the awfulness of the situation she was in. Shut up all alone in this cave, from which egress seemed next to impossible, a cruel and lingering death might be in store for her. True, she might shout and call, but the chances of being heard were scant, for none could come within earshot, except through the room she had just quitted; and of that there was now little probability, unless the old gypsy woman came that way, and she was so deaf that there was but small chance of her hearing even the loudest screams. She scanned the natural walls upon either side of the cavern's mouth, with the desperate thought of climbing out through the shrubs, but a survey of the impenetrable growth of a century, served but to deepen her despair.

Poor Izolda retreated to the farthest corner of the

cave, and in utter abandon, would have flung herself to the floor; but her foot striking some projection she stumbled forward and fell against what she soon realized were stone steps, cut out of the very bowels of the mountain. Here then was a glean of hope. Groping about her, she felt a wall upon either side, and bruised and shaken by her fall though she was, commenced to ascend; and as she did so the walls still stretched beyond her reach, upon both sides, as the steps carried her upward. Slowly and cautiously at first, but with increasing confidence she ascended. Step after step she mounted, and doing so, became conscious that she was ever turning to the left, as in the coils of a vast spiral. Up and up, until she was sure that she must be beyond the housetop, and still there was nothing but the cold wall on either hand and the rough steps beneath her feet. Up and still upward she toiled, until her limbs shook beneath her, and she was fain to sit down upon the steps for rest; but her great anxiety forbade tarrying, and again she pressed onward and upward now scarce able to drag herself from one ledge to the other; but still she perserved and was at length rewarded by a faint glimmer of light far above her head. Now she lost it in the bend of the stairway, and again it reappeared, till at last she dragged herself, utterly exhausted, out upon a ledge of rock, away up on the mountain side far above the highest turret of the roof below. This ledge was screened from observation by the thick growth of underwood, but an excellent outlook was secured for miles around,

except to the southeast, which was shut off by the towering shoulder of the mountain.

Izolda's brain was in a whirl, but she strove to collect her thoughts as she lay panting from the exertions of her long and difficult climb. By dragging herself over the shoulder of the hill, she could soon gain a pathway, which would lead her to the road passing the Vayvode's castle; but what good would that be, since she had learned below from the talk of Simon, that this road was watched? To be sure, there was another way of reaching the castle, by a detour through the woods at the foot of the hill to the north, but this would take several hours at the best, and the afternoon was already drawing to a close, while in her exhausted condition it was most doubtful whether she would be able to accomplish the journey. However, attempt it she must; and if she failed to arrive in time, she would at least be conscious of having done her utmost, and could hold herself guiltless of the innocent bloodshed.

Wearily she raised herself up, and commenced to press her way up to the top of the ridge. Arrived here after great exertion, she paused to rest again and to scan the surrounding landscape with a view to learning just where the peasants had betaken themselves to. There they were, just below where she stood, lounging about in the wood through which the rough road ran. She began to weigh the prospects of being able to slip past them in the dusk, and was about to commence her descent to make the effort, when a movement far down the road attracted her

attention, and her heart once more sank within her. There, at a point where the way led between precipitous rocks on either side, she descried three watchers, who were evidently placed to frustrate any attempt at warning. Sadly she turned and began to descend upon the opposite side, breathing a prayer that she might have strength to persevere and that she might not be too late.

But what is that, which the rays of the declining sun glint upon, away off there to the left upon the northern road? She stops and gazes eagerly. 'Tis a horseman, she is sure. But is he friend or foe? 'Tis probably some one from the castle; it may be the Vayvode, himself, and, by a supreme effort, she may be able to intercept him at the foot of the hill and warn him of the intended attack. All is perhaps not yet lost. But now the rider comes into fuller view, while the bright sunlight shines fully upon him, so that even at that great distance, Izolda is able to recognize the one person most hateful to her in all the wide world,—the Spaniard, Don Cardenio de Gaul.

All at once her eagerness vanishes. In the excitement of the past two hours, she had entirely forgotten him, so bent was she on the project of saving from danger the one whom she believed was necessary to the happiness of her hero, Michael. Strive to intercept *him* she could not. Rather would she make effort to run the gauntlet of those sentries in the gorge upon the southern road. But why not? Surely, impressed by the danger to his friends, the

exertions she had made, and great risk she had run to warn them, he would be ashamed of his previous conduct and treat her with all consideration. But instinctively the pure girl knew that it would not be so. Possibly he might treat her story with scorn, and influenced by the low estimate in which he held the peasant maidens, would perhaps be base enough to assign her former rebuff to his advances, to a knowledge of Michael's approach, and view her present warning as a ruse to throw herself in his way. Or even if he heeded her warning, he would at least be aware of her whereabouts, and would be sure to seek her out when the danger was past, and once in the power of such a conscienceless wretch,—God help her!

No. Let the wretch go to his doom; and as for the other inmates of the castle, they were after all nothing to her. Let them perish with him. She was beside herself to have already taken so much pains in fruitless endeavors to rescue them. What concern had she in the betrothed of the young Comes of Marot? Did she save her, he would perhaps think it not even worth while to thank her. She, an outcast peasant girl, was but as the dust beneath his feet. She would go back and proceed to her father's house in the full sight of the peasants, and assure them, if need be, that she was in full sympathy with their enterprise. Small blame to them, in their desire to exterminate and bring to an end the insolence and tyranny of such as this Spaniard.

As Izolda turned she started. What was that?

Had someone spoken to her? It was as though a soft voice had whispered in her ear: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Where had she heard those words before? Ah, yes. She remembered now. A strange priest had once visited the village church at Marot—an old man; one who seemed so much kinder and gentler than Father Paul. He had spoken with her as he passed her in the village one day, and on the Sunday in the church had spoken to the people of the goodness and love of God, and had repeated these words more than once in his talk. What did it mean? Would she lay down her life for Michael Dobozy? Why not? She could be happy in doing so, while there would be no more happiness for her to live did she make no further effort to avert this frightful calamity. Yet, dare she face the almost certainty of dishonor which would be hers did she venture within the reach of this vile Spaniard? The good priest surely would not counsel that? Perhaps not; and yet, somehow she felt almost a certainty that he would bid her persevere in her determination to give the warning if she could. The poor girl was in an agony of despair, and stood for some moments with hands clasped and set white face, while the terrific struggle raged within. At length she gasped between her drawn lips.

"Yes. For Michael Dobozy, for my sweet love's sake I will suffer even dishonor itself!" adding with a groan as she rushed down the mountain side, "O God help me!"

Down, down, she stumbled over the rough mountain side, pushing resolutely through thick underbrush, which tore her clothes and bruised and scratched her face and neck, as she strove to brush it aside. At some points the descent was so steep that she had the utmost difficulty to keep her feet, while her chest seemed ready to burst and her breath came in gasps, so violent were her exertions. Yet, she felt she dared not stop. While she had hesitated at the brow of the hill, the horseman had made substantial progress along the road, and if she were to intercept him before he had passed through the wood at the foot of the hill, she must lose not a moment. On and on pressed the brave girl, though her limbs trembled beneath her from weakness, and her head seemed to spin round upon her shoulders. Oh! She *must not* give in to her weariness; she *must* persevere and deliver her message of warning, even if it be with her last gasp. Her foot strikes a root, and she stumbles and falls heavily, yet heeds not the cruel bruises received but struggles to her feet, concerned only at the slight delay to her progress, and again rushes onward. At last she is at the foot of the descent; but she has still some half mile or more to traverse before she reaches the roadway, and the underbrush is here even thicker and the ground more rough than on the hillside; and now is added to her anxiety lest she be too late, a fear that the peasants may be watching this road also. Yet still she goes bravely forward, determined to accomplish her errand at whatever cost. Her breath now comes in deep

sobs, which threaten to choke her, and she almost reels as she struggles along. Courage, for a few moments longer. She may yet be in time. Yes, she can now hear the hoof-beats of the horse upon the roadway; and, Oh, joy! They are still *to her left*. One more supreme effort to drag her trembling limbs faster over the ground, and the goal will be reached. But what after? A pang of bitterest agony shoots through that brave pure soul, yet she falters not, but struggles steadily onward. The hoof-beats are almost abreast of her now but she will be at the roadside in another minute. Unwary for a moment, she stumbles again and falls headlong into a thorn bush. Nothing daunted, she assays to rise, but cannot. Her clothing is entangled among the thorns, and impedes her movements. Again and again, she makes the effort, but unsuccessfully. Oh, horrors! Can she be so near, and yet fail? She can hear the Spaniard passing, almost beside her. In another moment he will be gone and it will be too late. No, no! It must not be! She screams. But her breath is so spent, that only a low gurgling whisper in her throat, which seems to taunt and mock her helplessness, rewards her effort, while already the hoof-beats upon the road sound fainter. With a last despairing effort she wrenches herself free, leaving half her clothing among the thorns; and all unmindful of the fact that she is now almost covered with bleeding scratches, from head to foot, reels, she knows not how, to the roadway, where she sinks again to the earth and loses all consciousness.

CHAPTER XII.

A FORTUNATE MEETING.

The Comes of Temes had received his young artist guest most cordially, well pleased to learn that the Comes of Marot was of one mind with him, as to the necessity of frustrating the proposed crusade if at all possible; but he was not so well pleased on learning that he was also bent on a mission to the Vayvode of Transylvania, and endeavored to dissuade him from proceeding. But Michael had promised his father and was very loath to abandon the journey without his bidding. However, he could not refuse to accept the suggestion that he remain a guest at Temesvar until after the assembling of the Diet, which was to decide the question of the crusade. If the project was upheld, then perhaps it might be advisable for him to proceed; but, if on the contrary, the Archbishop's schemes were foiled, then there could be nothing gained by giving Szapolyai a pretext for interfering further in the affairs of the kingdom. The Diet had been held, and after much stormy debate and many bitter words, the party of Bakacs had been triumphant, yet still the Comes contrived upon one pretext and another to delay his guest's departure from day to day. At length, however, he

was himself summoned hurriedly to Buda, and Michael took advantage of the opportunity to take his leave, and once more proceeded upon his journey.

As he went forward with his little cavalcade,—for in those lawless times, when each petty noble was wont to levy toll upon every traveler who was without the means of disputing his exactions, it was not considered safe to travel for any distance, except in companies,—he could not fail to notice that the fields were all but deserted by the peasantry, and he smiled grimly to himself as he reflected that the crusade was evidently prospering well as regards recruits at the expense of the task-masters of the people, and he could not help but feel a secret satisfaction at the fact. Nevertheless he sighed, as he thought how miserable indeed must be the condition of these poor people, when they were so willing to risk the fortunes of a campaign against the fierce Turks, in order to escape for a time from the exactions of their rulers; and dark forbodings pressed down upon his soul as he sought to find some ray of hope for the welfare of his beloved Hungary piercing the clouds which seemed now to settle in darkest gloom over the future outlook. What hope indeed could be found where on one side was naught but grasping, selfish greed and oppression, and on the other nothing but blank and sullen despair? At length he is drawing nigh to his journey's end, but appears by no means elated at the prospect, as might have been expected of one, who was going as the already half-accepted suitor of the daughter of the most powerful noble in the kingdom

over which Uladislaus held sway. If the truth were known, he was thinking more of the probable meeting with Cardenio de Gaul, who he knew had preceded him hither, than of the Vayvode's daughter, for, as yet, he was by no means an ardent lover.

They have made the last halt of the journey and are now pressing on to reach the castle ere night shall fall. Already the shades of evening are drawing in while they have still some miles to cover, and as the night gives promise of being black and moonless, they have quickened the pace of their wearied beasts in order to escape darkness upon the road, when Michael, who is considerably in advance of his followers, is startled to see a young girl, ragged and bleeding from many wounds, emerge from the wood beside the roadway, and fall almost beneath the hoofs of his horse, which he, with a strong rein, pulls back upon his haunches, then quickly alights and kneels beside the prostrate figure. The face is all torn and bleeding from many a cut, scratch and cruel blow received in the forest. He scarcely thinks to discover the identity of the one thus sadly bruised; but there is something familiar which arrests his attention, and causes him to look more closely at the scarred countenance, and a low exclamation escapes him as he recognizes it as that of Izolda Dózsa. How did she come here, and in this sorry plight? What does it all mean? are the questions which arise in his mind; but he is busy the while in striving to revive her, taking from his saddle-bag a small flask of wine and pouring a few drops between her lips.

For a few minutes his efforts appear unavailing, while the remainder of the party cluster about and ask each his neighbor, what can be the cause of the maiden's woeful plight. In time, however, responding to Michael's ministrations, a glimmer of consciousness returns and her lips begin to move. Bending low to catch the words, he hears a name spoken, as it appears to him, in joyful accents, and that name was,— "*Senor de Gaul.*" Michael started as if stung and had almost cast the helpless form from him, as a dark suspicion crossed his mind. Could it be that this peasant girl, whom he had thought worthy to act as model for his Magdalene, had really become enamoured of that gay courtier and have accompanied him hither when he left Marot? But if so, why was she here in this condition? Was it possible that the villain had cruelly misused and then abandoned her thus? This was perhaps more than likely. She has opened her eyes now, and in wild terror looks from face to face, while she struggles to regain her feet. And now, her fearful gaze rests once more upon Michael's and a smile of recognition breaks over her, while she utters a little cry of joy, and nestles closer to him; then, looking down upon her half naked body she draws away amid blushes and strives to gather the ragged remnants of her dress more closely about her. But in a moment a look of horror returns to her countenance and she cries in wild alarm.

"The castle, the castle, Michael; haste ere it be too late;" and trembling with excitement and weakness,

had fallen again but for his supporting arms, while she motions him with imploring gestures to mount and away.

"Calm thyself, Izolda. Naught can harm thee here. What of the castle?"

"Yes. The castle! The castle!" she again cries.

"'Tis Simon C'sop. He and his peasants will strive to take it to-night and kill all while they sleep!"

"Twas now Michael's turn to become alarmed, and he eagerly questioned her.

"What mean you, Izolda? Tell me quickly. What is this you are saying?"

She, poor child, weeping for very gladness at finding at last a strong true arm to lean upon, tells the whole story as best she can between her sobs; and Michael, as he listens, though startled at the intended treachery of the peasants and filled with anxiety for the safety of the castle's inmates, yet feels a lightening of a weight upon his heart the purport of which he hardly knows. He tarries no longer to question further, but springing to the saddle, he takes the shrinking maid before him upon his horse and giving the word to proceed, pushes on at topmost speed.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOREWARNED AND FOREARMED.

Dusk has given place to darkness and the day has merged into night,—earlier in the deep recesses of the forest and in the valleys, later in the open and about the mountain tops,—until at length the entire landscape is enveloped in the one sombre pall of blackness, which now appears to hang over the earth, while a solemn silence broods over the vast and impenetrable veil of black nothingness, extending in every direction from the high hill, upon which stands the proud castle of the ruler of all these mountain fastnesses and wooded vales of Transylvania. The castle itself is wrapped in darkness, and is utterly swallowed up in the black void except to one standing within arm's length of the vast pile, when it looms up in shadowy shapelessness like a phantom of the night, to be dispelled at the first peep of dawn. The whole surrounding land seems wrapped in nature's sweet imitation of death, as indeed one would expect to be the case, for now the midnight hour is fast approaching. But were that black pall to be suddenly lifted, or were we endowed with feline sight, a startling spectacle would meet our gaze.

At the base of the hill, a score or more of shadowy

figures have congregated, whose numbers are constantly added to by a continual stream of other shadowy forms, which silently approach along the road leading to the castle, that here emerges from the forest, until the score first noticed has been quadrupled thrice over. Who are these, and whence come they in such spectral manner? Are they some forest demons, gathering thus when all human eyes are closed, to indulge in some mysterious sylvan rites, such as mortal may ne'er behold and live, or are they shades of departed Magyar heroes brought hither by some cruel decree of fate, to enact once more the scenes of blood and violence, in which their spirits were wrenched from their mortal frames in some bygone age? The latter would seem to approach the truth, since when our eyes have become more accustomed to the darkness, we can note that each carries a weapon of some description, the variety of which would suggest acquaintance with almost every generation since the followers of the first Arpad came westward to possess the land. Clubs, bows, spears of various and fantastic design, swords, daggers and even scythes, while here and there a halberd is to be seen, and two or three are the proud possessors of arquebuses.

Stealthily the motley collection move up the slope, until they reach the edge of the deep moat surrounding the castle. Here perforce a halt is made; but while the main body hold their ground, two or three move cautiously along the edge and peer anxiously across the chasm. If they had expected the draw-

bridge to be down, they are disappointed, as it is drawn high in the air and all appears fast and secure as should be in a well regulated fortress. They return to the main body, and a whispered consultation takes place. Then in a moment or two, one separates himself from the rest and moves close to the edge of the moat, where he drops to the ground and crawls slowly along until directly opposite the barbican. In a moment a harsh sound—the first un-suppressed which has broken the stillness for the last hour,—breaks forth with startling clearness, and we are now satisfied that these are indeed spirits from the nether world, so fiendish is the laughter which greets our ears. Now it is repeated and we are ready to acknowledge that our tensioned nerves have made sport of us, for we recognize the “Hu, Hu” of a tree owl which must have roamed from the forest to some turret of the castle, though a moment since we would have sworn that the seeming laughter proceeded from the spot where the spectral figure had just disappeared. The silence which now follows for a few seconds is painful, while in that silent band all ears seem strained to catch some response to that hideous call; but none is heard until again that startling laughter breaks forth.

Now indeed a response is heard, but of a character vastly different from the expectations of these spectral raiders. Instead of the creaking of the lowering drawbridge, or signal from the traitor within, a mighty thunder breaks forth from the battlements of the fortress, and tongues of flame belch forth from

its dark walls, while a deadly hail of bullets from horse pistol and arquebuse, bolts from cross-bows and other missiles equally as destructive, together with a ball from the small cannon mounted upon the roof of the keep, plough into the ranks of the heretofore silent figures, who are in a moment transformed into a frenzied mob of howling demons, who rush shrieking and cursing, madly down the steep acclivity, followed by a second shower of missiles as fierce as the first, but which is, however, more harmless, since they fly over the heads of the fugitives, who continue their disorderly and frantic flight without check until the shelter of the forest is again reached; and here even, they were rallied only after much persuasion and more threatenings by the swineherd and Simon C'sop, who indeed, truth compels us to relate, had not been by any means the rearmost of the fleeing throng. The majority were for an immediate return to their homes and the abandonment of all operations against the nobles.

"All is lost! We are betrayed!" they cried. "The traitor, George, instead of lowering for us the drawbridge hath denounced us to the Vayvode, and he will visit terrible vengeance upon us. Let us submit while there is yet time, and accept with what grace we may the punishment he inflicts, lest we speedily come to greater evil at his hands."

"Not so. Not so," say the leaders. "True, we have been betrayed, and the one in whom we put such confidence has failed us, so that we are now discomfited, but nothing can be gained and all will

be lost if we now return to our homes. We have doubtless all been denounced to the Vayvode, and he will of a surety requite us in full measure, can he do so, and nothing short of our lives would satisfy him. Then why quietly place our necks in the noose? Rather let us still pursue our plans, until strengthened by victory, we shall prove such a menace to him and other nobles that they will gladly give us the rights and freedom we demand."

The wretched peasants, deceived by these specious arguments, stopped not to reflect that their leaders only were known to their accomplice within the castle, and only they could have been endangered by the treachery of this man, who—if they had but known it—even then lay cold in death at the bottom of the moat, stabbed to the heart by the hand of the Vayvode himself and his corpse thrown thus unceremoniously forth. But such seems ever the way in which men, rendered desperate by real or fancied wrongs, and in the vain delusion that they will thus speedily redress such wrongs, are led into the worst excesses by those who are themselves deluded, or as too often happens, have other ends to gain and use their misguided fellows as puppets to serve them. So, after an hour's persuasion and argument, the band of peasants, save for a few stragglers, have once more been marshalled into rude order, and with the fiery swineherd at their head, make a detour about the unattainable castle and push their way to the eastward. Such good marchers are they that the intense darkness is yet unbroken by any hint of dawn,

when they have put a dozen miles between them and the scene of their first attempt and approach the neighborhood of another castle, which is occupied by a noble whose exactions and cruelties have made his name detested by the people for miles around.

Dense darkness has, in the neighborhood of the Vayvode's castle, once more settled upon all objects and hidden them from view: a darkness more profound by contrast to the vivid brightness, which had for the moment broken in upon it. Silence also once more reigns, save for those half suppressed groans which proceed from the edge of the moat, telling all too plainly of the havoc which that leaden welcome from the fortress had played in the ranks of the assailants. Save for these groans and the gruesome and weird feelings which they provoked, the sentinel upon the walls of the keep might have been tempted to pronounce the events of the past few minutes as but a dream of the night, so stealthily had the peasants moved to their attack and so quickly had they been dispersed. But, kept wakeful by these awesome sounds below them, the watchers on the castle walls paced to and fro, through the long, weary hours until the morn approached and a ruddy glow to the eastward warned them that the night of anxious watching was all but over. But surely, the sun never yet heralded his rising by such a reddening of the horizon as that. The sentinels pause in their rounds and after gazing for a time, cry out to their comrades below, who looking forth are also impressed by the greatness of that light. The Vayvode,—who it now

seems was either not absent or else had returned earlier than the conspirators had expected,—and his guests mount upon the roof to observe the sight, and the cheek of each pales as he looks forth, while he asks his neighbor,—crossing himself meanwhile—what it can portend; yet, in his heart already knows full well, though each fears to put the frightful truth in words. Fearsomely, from the battlements of the castle they continue to gaze at that strange glow in the east, until with the rising of the sun it pales and vanishes like some phantom of the night; and some there were who would fain have held it such, did not a murky cloud (till now hidden in the darkness) make its appearance to hang like a pall over that portion of the horizon and refuse to be dispersed even when the strengthened rays of the orb of day had melted every sign of haze from all quarters of the landscape.

CHAPTER XIV.

JANOS' FATAL BANQUET.

Surely now, O Comes George Janos, have you need of those thick walls and high battlements, which it has been your pride to erect amid the groans and curses of the wretched serfs, whom you compelled to labor early and late in the building thereof, with scant or no recompense, while the poor harvest which they were able to secure from the small holdings which you permitted them to cultivate in their own behalf must either be gathered in by their weary wives and daughters,—yea, even toddling children,—or left to rot in the stalk,—your own abundant crops meantime having first been carefully garnered for you into your barns. Well may you start uneasily and mutter in your gross dreams, as you lie there like a besotted beast upon the floor of your great banqueting hall; for far worse carnival than even the wildest phantasy of the disordered imagination of a surfeited glutton, will the nonce be enacted for your delectation.

Though they knew it not, the attack of the desperate peasantry had been well timed, for high revel such as so often filled the nights of the Hungarian nobility had this eve been at its height within the hall. But even as they approached without, the good

cheer of meat and wines set before the guests had worked their charm, until the majority, including the lord of the castle himself, lay stretched in drunken slumber about the board, while others, of stronger nerve, or more famous trenchermen, still kept their places, and exhilarated by the fumes of the wines provided, vied each with his fellow in some ribald song or pointless story, till they also are overcome by the persuasive influence of their many potations, and sink ignominiously to the floor, like the dying embers of some mighty conflagration, which flare up fiercely and phœnix-like the moment before they subside into charred nothingness. At this notable feast, Janos, moved by some whim of drunken folly, had bidden that all the soldiers of his small garrison be well supplied from his table, so now, some even, who should have been upon the walls, watchful and alert, could be counted among those who were stretched upon the floor. Hence when the swineherd, with four or five chosen companions, crept stealthily toward the walls to reconnoitre, while the main body, rendered more timid by their earlier experience, wait at a safe distance for assurance that this garrison has not been warned also, they are surprised to find the drawbridge down as though inviting them to enter and take possession. After a careful examination lest this apparent easy access should prove an artifice to entrap them, they return to their comrades in high spirits and impart the good news to them. On hearing of this the confidence of all in their leaders is at once restored, so that they who a few hours before

could scarce be held back from a general stampede, are now with almost as great difficulty restrained in their impatience to attack.

Silently, as before, the whole number now advance to the drawbridge and proceed to cross the moat. So great is the eagerness of the first onward rush, one poor wretch is pushed over the edge and falls shrieking into the pit below. This might have proved the ruin of his companions had the garrison been on the alert, for there was yet time to have dropped the portcullis ere the foremost could cross and reach the other side; but the Comes' conviviality had sealed his doom, and none were there to seize the opportunity. True, some three or four halberdiers, not entirely besotted, came running to learn the cause of the outcry, but they were ruthlessly cut down, while yet too bewildered to realize that they were attacked, and their weapons quickly appropriated by their executioners, who pressed on into the interior of the castle and soon burst into the banqueting hall, where the great majority of the Comes' guests and soldiery lay helpless at their mercy. Far from being satisfied with their easy entrance, the first taste of blood seemed only to have further maddened this band of desperate men, who throwing law and order to the winds, have assayed to right their own wrongs, and are ripe to wreak a cruel vengeance for generations of injustice and cruelty. With fierce shouts they fall upon the hapless wretches who lie, some still slumbering, others just wakened, dazed and confused, about the festive board, and a scene of

hideous butchery ensues. Recklessly cutting, stabbing and slashing, in their fury they seem scarce to know whether they attack the living or the dead, and more than one unconscious sleeper is first brained by a blow from a huge club in the hands of one, and later his inanimate corpse cut to pieces by those who follow after.

But not all are thus disposed of like beasts in the shambles. To some few the shouts of battle and the clash of arms bring instant sobriety, and instinctively they clutch the weapons nearest to hand and springing to their feet prove not easy victims for their assailants. Some seven or eight only of these at length remain rallied together at the far end of the hall, with Janos in their midst, fighting most valorously,—for the Comes, though besotted, cruel and selfishly grasping, was but the product of his age and race, and by no means a coward, now stands like a lion at bay with an hundred jackals snarling about him. He wields his huge sword to such good purpose, ably seconded by the few who remain beside, that they have at length cleared a small space about them, within which none seems willing to thrust himself. Quick to discern this slight advantage, the Comes commences to edge toward the door which leads from the hall by a stairway, to his private apartments in the keep. If they can but gain this stairway, escape to the keep and barricade the door above, they may be able to stand siege until succor shall arrive. It is but a forlorn hope, but even the most desperate chance were better than certain butchery.

As soon as he and his few comrades commence to move, their assailants, divining their object, rush more furiously than ever to the attack and half a score, coming within the sweep of those flashing swords, roll to the floor to add to the great heap of corpses, but in the mad rush three of the brave remnant likewise go down, while a body of the peasants strive to take possession of the stairway and thus cut off all chance of escape. But the doorway is just within reach of the sword points of the hard pressed band, and they ply their blades to such good purpose that they at length make an opening for themselves, and springing to the door, three, covered by the mighty arm of Janos, reach the stair, and he after another fierce onslaught upon his foes, likewise mounts upward, followed closely by the more venturesome of the assailants. And now the narrow passage resounds with the clash of steel, dull blows and deep curses, as panting and well-nigh exhausted, the quartette slowly give way inch by inch before their pursuers, until the door at the top of the stairway is reached. Here another short and desperate stand is made ending in a still fiercer onslaught of the peasants in a last endeavor to prevent their victims from opening, entering and closing the door behind them; but success at length crowns the efforts of the hard pressed warriors, though one, alas, falls dead within the threshold, while the survivors quickly seize all that can be moved in the room and pile for a barricade against the door which is already resounding with the

blows of the fiends without, who refuse to be thus balked of their prey.

Standing in the centre of the room, which has been thus unceremoniously entered and which is the living room of the Comes' family, is a tall and beautiful girl, but scantily clad, evidencing that she had been aroused out of sleep. With long dark hair hanging loosely about her shoulders and descending to her waist, blanched cheeks, white, set lips and dilated eyes, she watches in mute terror the movements of her father and his companions, while she clutches convulsively a loaded arquebuse. Pausing for a moment after the completion of his preparations for defense, the Comes catches sight of this piteous figure and springing to her side the fierce warrior is in a moment as gentle as a woman, as he strives to reassure her.

"Fear not, my child," he softly says. "All is not yet lost, and ere these fiends force an entrance we may have succor from without. Let me take this toy of yours;" and, aside to one of his companions, "It will prove of use in giving a fitting reception to him who first bursts through our barricade."

Still silent, in a spell of frozen horror, the maiden relinquishes her grasp upon the weapon, but at once tightly seizes her father's arm instead, while all stand waiting, thankful for a brief breathing space before the final tragedy. They will not have long to wait; for the attack upon the door from the stairway continues unceasingly. And now, a great glare from without is reflected in the room through the em-

brasures in the walls. Striding to one of these, the Comes looks forth and sees, that which he has already surmised is transpiring. Bent upon destruction, the fierce rabble, their work of butchery accomplished, and leaving to the braver spirits the work of doing to death the desperate remnant of the castle's defenders, have fired the wooden buildings in the courtyard below, and the flames have quickly become communicated to the roofs of the main pile, so that shortly the whole will be a seething, melting furnace. Gathering around this huge bonfire, the triumphant peasants, delirious with joy and madly drunken, as it were, with the blood of their foes, dance and sing like demons from the nethermost pit, wildly shouting their defiance of the nobles and vain-gloriously imagining,—poor misguided fools,—that they have already quite accomplished their own deliverance from the thraldom which so long has been the lot of the Magyar peasant. One, catching sight of the Comes' face at the window, where it is plainly outlined in the glare of the fire, draws the attention of his fellows, and loud shouts of derision, fierce curses and foul invectives ascend to the ears of the proud noble and his shivering child, who still closely clutches him.

Does it not, in these quiet, peaceful days, seem almost incredible that such atrocities could be committed or that human beings could be capable of such cruelties? Yet is the picture not overdrawn,—the reverse rather. Are the peasants in this wild throng the same, who a few days since could be seen

harvesting their grain, herding their swine, or engaged in any one of the various occupations of the peasant's life,—quiet, dull, listless, as though the world itself might cease to be and it would be all one to them? And if so, have they not gone suddenly, violently and hopelessly insane? Else how are they transformed so quickly into this howling, jabbering, gesticulating and hideous mob engaged in deeds of blood and rapine, the wantonness and cruelty of which might cause even the fiends of the lower world to blush with shame? Surely, rational, reasoning beings, could not in blood and fire riot thus! Some frightful mania must have taken possession of them!

Yes, insane are they, as are all men, and women also, who for the time, forgetting the words “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” undertake to dispense “justice” in their own behalf, and giving free course to passion, embark on that swift stream, the end of which they seem not to see, though it be the while all so plain “that he may run that readeth it.” Such dethrone from its lawful seat, conscience,—that inward voice of God in man,—and flattering her with various names, whether “Reason,” “Liberty,” “Equality,” or other vainglorious title, allow its place to be usurped by the “strange woman,” and follow on blindly, heedlessly and all too surely to the brink of that dark abyss, whither she leads all who worship her.

Fearful indeed, and too horrible to detail, were the crimes perpetrated by those uneducated, down-trodden, half wild, desperate and deceived Hungar-

ian peasants. But after all were they any worse,—yea, the rather, were they half so bad, half so outrageous, half so cruel, or guilty of half the injustice, the indignity, the disdain, the tyranny and the inhumanity, with which these same peasants had been treated for generations by the very class whom they had at length, in desperation, risen against and sought to exterminate? Verily, if we be but barely just, and blessed with but merely ordinary discernment, must we not admit that, while such deeds of blood and horror revolt and terrify us, yet perpetrated in the heat of passion by those goaded to desperation, they,—as it were,—stand clothed in the white robes of innocence, when compared with the slowly torturing, coldly calculating, systematically extortionate, selfishly indifferent and scornfully insolent injustice of those, who for the sake of their own advantage and personal aggrandizement, day after day, month after month, year after year, generation after generation, like father, like son, carelessly and wantonly drive those weaker than themselves to such a condition of hopeless despair?

With a contemptuous smile, Janos looks away from the pitiful exhibition and gazes anxiously along the roadway, which is lighted up for a mile or more, and his heart sinks within him, for he sees no sign of succor, while louder and still louder grows the din, and the battering blows upon the door cease not. Even as he turns to re-enter the room their frail barricade topples over them with a loud crash and their merciless foes are once more upon them. His two

sole remaining companions, survivors of the fierce battle, spring to meet the fate from which there is no escape, anxious only to do the utmost execution before they fall. For a moment or two the unequal fight rages ere the two go down, each bleeding from a dozen fatal wounds, while a rush is made for the Comes and his daughter. Seizing the arquebuse, which he had taken from his daughter's hands, Janos levels it at the swineherd, who heads the band, and sends the ball crashing through his brain, then seizing his child in his arms he springs through an embrasure upon the battlements and mounting the parapet, leaps with his fair burden from the wall, and meets death at the bottom of the moat an hundred feet below. A moment later the upper story of the keep, undermined by the burning of the rafters below, sinks inward, burying a full score of the authors of this destruction in its ruins, while just then the dawn, which had, unnoticed, been for some time struggling in the east, bursts forth into day, and as its light increases that of the conflagration diminishes in ghastly, sickly contrast to the brilliancy of the risen sun, which might well remain fixed in wonderment on the horizon at the scene of death and destruction exposed by his rays, spread out as a vile blot upon the otherwise peaceful and delightful landscape.

The peasants, appalled by the disaster to so many of their number and frightened by the awful revelation of the wanton destruction they had caused, laid bare in all its hideousness by the rising orb, without waiting one for the other, but with one accord, beat

a hasty retreat to the forest, like so many ghouls caught in the indulgence in their disgusting feast and fleeing from the light of day, while nought but a heap of smoldering ruins remained to mark the whereabouts of the once proud castle of Janos and a stifling odor of baking flesh to tell all too plainly the fate of its lord, his boon companions and his retainers.

CHAPTER XV.

THE VAYVODE'S TRIUMPH.

John Szapolyai did not stay long gazing at the tell-tale signs of rampant anarchy. Instead he gave quick, sharp orders for the assembling of his yeomanry and prepared to ride forth in quest of the authors of the last night's violence. First, however, he paid a visit to bruised and suffering Izolda, whom he questioned most closely as to the movements of the peasants, their actions during the past few days, and all that she had heard said which would throw any light upon their further plans. The poor maid answered him as best she might, being overjoyed that the raid upon the castle had failed, yet in great anxiety lest harm to her dear father should come of it all, and she did her best to shield him from any suspicion of having given countenance to the actions of the raiders. But it did not take the shrewd and cunning Vayvode long to see through the pitiful attempts of the daughter to lead away from all mention of Dózsa's name, and he at once made a certainty of what was to her but a dreaded possibility, and he determined to hold the bold captain personally responsible for the outbreak.

Before noon a strong force had been gathered, and

with Szapolyai at its head rode forth to pursue and punish the marauders. First they rode directly toward the neighboring castle of Janos, and that they were following the route taken by the peasants was soon plainly evident by the trampled roadsides. Though largely prepared for it, the spectacle presented to their vision when they arrived upon the site of the, yesterday, proud castle proved a rude shock to every one in the company, and if there was one who felt the slightest leaning toward leniency in dealing with the peasants, his heart was at once steeled against them, and each felt prepared to do his part in carrying out the dread retribution which the Vayvode at once swore to mete out to all concerned in that night's fearful outrage. The charred ruins were still smouldering and smoking, while irregular masses of the blackened walls stood out here and there like grim sentinels, who had died at their post of duty rather than prove false to their trust. But there was not need to dwell upon fancied devotion, for gruesome evidence of the fierce defense was close at hand. Scattered here and there among the ruins were to be seen limbs, headless trunks and trunkless heads, all fearfully hacked and mangled, mute witnesses of the fiendish lust of blood and butchery which had taken possession of the victors, making them still seek to wreak vengeance upon the inanimate corpses of their fallen foes. At the bottom of the moat, covered by the debris of the fallen wall were unearthed the crushed and lifeless bodies of the Comes and his daughter,—the latter, so lately all so fair, beautiful

and captivating to the eye of the beholder, now a thing unlovely, horrible and sickening to the sight.

Tarrying but long enough to give direction for the interment of the bodies, Szapolyai led his now eager band again into the forest, and rode hard upon the track of the perpetrators of this wanton butchery. They had not proceeded far in the pursuit ere it became evident that their quarry, either from prearrangement, or on account of sudden panic, had abandoned all attempt at united progress, and scattering, had made their retreat in a score of different directions. The Vayvode at once decided to forego further organized pursuit, but instead to carry out a house-to-house visitation of the peasants on all the neighboring estates; and dividing his force into bands of three or four, gave to each its district, with the instruction to show no quarter to any peasant who was unable to give the strictest account of his whereabouts during the preceding night. Most faithfully were these orders carried out by his followers; and many a terror-stricken man, dragged forth from beside his wife and children, bewildered by their questioning, and unable fully to satisfy his impatient inquisitors, paid the death penalty for a crime of which he was all innocent and also ignorant of: this before the eyes of those he held dear, and who, widowed and orphaned, then had the added misery of seeing the poor shelter, which was to them a home, burned to the ground, and they themselves turned into the forest.

Szapolyai meanwhile rode straight to the house of

Dózsa, and after ransacking it in vain for evidence of the treason of its master, ordered the torch to be applied. Close by, in hiding, were unearthed Gregory, with Simon, the hot-headed leader of the ill-starred and short-lived insurrection, who, when unable to control his panic-stricken followers, once the light of day had revealed to them their handiwork in all its naked horror had hither fled in vain hope to escape the stern avenger. These, with exquisite torture, were without respite put to death, and well satisfied that all danger of the treason's spreading was at an end, the Transylvanian ruler returned to his castle just as night came on again. But that day's work by no means ended the efforts of the Vayvode to insure the restoration of law and order, and to place beyond all question any further rising of the peasantry within his borders. He grimly said that he would give those who were quite innocent of complicity in the conspiracy good reason to curse the folly of those who had dared to strike a rebellious blow against their masters. And right faithfully did he keep his word, for they were quickly shorn of aught of privilege which had remained to them and subjected to a system of such harsh surveillance that their condition was scarce one jot removed from abject slavery. No wonder, then, that those who, if successful, would have been hailed as liberators and extolled as patriots, were instead envied for the swift death which had delivered them from these further persecutions, while all mention of their names was but in execration for their disastrous failure.

Michael Dobozy had accompanied his host throughout that terrible day, and while his passion rose as he viewed the cruel destruction at Janos, and he could not dispute the justice of the retribution meted out to those who had wrought it, yet his heart grew heavy and sick within him at the many sad sights he saw, and he pondered, as he rode, on the wretchedness and misery still in store for the many innocent women and children now helpless and bereft. No wonder that he questioned within himself whether the real authors of that night's crimes were not, after all, those who, by their cruel and indifferent treatment of their dependants, had driven them to the desperation which ripened into such outrages; and gladly would he have intervened in more than one case to save the life of one he felt persuaded innocent; but one look at the firm, set face of Szapolyai showed but too plainly the futility of all argument. Now the time passed irksomely. He had indeed wished to immediately set out upon his return to Marot, but the Vayvode counselled delay, saying that with the country in such an unsettled state, his little following would have but small chance of reaching its destination in safety, and nothing could be gained by sacrificing himself and them, when later on every strong arm would doubtless prove of value. So the young artist stayed on and grew each day more impatient to be off, for while at first there had been no doubt of the heartiness of his welcome, and the beautiful Joanna had been most gracious to him, yet after a few days he became conscious of a marked change in the treatment accorded

him by both father and daughter,—cold looks and ceremonious politeness taking the place of the previous open friendliness. This he was quick to trace to the machinations of the Spaniard, de Gaul, who was still a favored guest of Szapolyai and went much in his company as he journeyed to and fro, though he also contrived to spend no little time in the society of Joanna, in whose good graces it was evident he held high place. Him, Michael, in deference to their common host, was compelled to meet on terms of apparent friendliness, though he ever felt a longing to seize him by the throat, which longing was strengthened by the tone of covert insolence in which the Spaniard,—a master of such arts—frequently found opportunity to address him in the presence of one and all.

Little saw he of Izolda, who, poor maid, was for some time gravely ill after that night's awful experience, and was still quite weak and frail. When he did at length encounter her, he found that she was still filled with anxiety for the safety of her father, and she pleaded pitifully that if chance availed he would do his utmost to preserve him harmless from his foes. This he readily promised, though he had little faith that aught he could do would prove of any service to the peasant chief, did his enemies gain possession of his person.

"But of yourself, Izolda," he inquired. "Whither go you, and what is your purpose until your father come again?"

"That I had indeed scarce thought of until yester-

day, when I sought to leave the castle on a visit to my father's house. An halberdier quickly stopped me and made known, though not unkindly, that his lord's instructions were that I go not beyond the castle walls. So 'tis plain I am a prisoner."

"I do not know but that the Vayvode is quite wise, and that for the present you are indeed safest near to the person of his daughter," responded Michael, in whose heart there grew up a great pity for the poor, helpless maid, whose father he much doubted would ever return to her, while the immediate presence of the unprincipled Spaniard added not to her security.

Several weeks went by, during which, at times, vague rumors of fearful happenings in the Alföld and surrounding district penetrated to the castle. 'Twas said that there, the vast crusading army, gathered under Dózsa to proceed against the Turks, had prevailed upon its commander to first turn his attention to the righting of the peasants' wrongs and the lifting of the burdens under which they had groaned for generations. Everywhere success had rested with the rebels, and the forces of the nobles were broken and scattered, and soon Dózsa would have but to dictate his own terms to the former oppressors. All these reports Szapolyai examined by strictest inquiry of those who brought them, but made no remark, though he could at times be seen smiling grimly to himself; meantime he redoubled his vigilance in measures to maintain order within his own borders,

being for this purpose necessarily much away from his castle, in distant parts of the principality.

At length, one evening an armed party was seen approaching from the west at great speed, riding straight for the castle gates at which they were soon loudly knocking. After some parley,—for in those days the nobles did not readily throw open their doors for strangers, as it often happened that even one's nearest neighbor would arrive unexpectedly upon anything but a friendly visit,—the Vayvode, who was at home, commanded the draw-bridge to be lowered, standing ready meantime with several chosen followers at the barbican, to take immediate action upon the slightest hint of treachery. His precautions, however, prove unnecessary, for though the knight who led the party had doubtless at times drawn sword in opposition to the Transylvanian prince, he was now clearly upon friendly mission bent. He was, in fact, come to crave assistance, and after but scant refreshment, made haste to make known his errand to the Vayvode.

In brief, the position of the Hungarian nobles had become well-night desperate. After the first panic, caused by the rising of the peasants, was past, they had gathered together an army and sought to oppose the march of Dózsa; but their forces went down like chaff before the fierce onslaught of his desperate hordes, who, not content with slaying their foes upon the battle field, were now overrunning the whole land, destroying and burning at will, while all who fell into

their murderous hands quickly met a cruel death. Stephen Telegedy, the Treasurer, and the Bishop of Csand were among the latest victims of their fiendish lust for blood. Indeed, it was only by constantly feeding this sanguinary appetite, that Dzsa could at all keep any control of his motley following, and his latest move had been to lay siege to Temesvar.

"In this dire extremity, O, Prince," the emissary concluded, "the most illustrious Comes of Temes has sent me to crave the aid of such a renowned soldier as the Vayvode of Transylvania, and he has all confidence that in this hour of our Hungary's need, you will magnanimously lay aside all thought of private quarrels and haste with such force as you can command to the aid of our most sorely pressed forces; and he doth solemnly pledge himself and for his associates, that loyal support will be given you in whatever measures you may deem best for the safety of the kingdom."

Szapolyai did not at once make answer, but sat as though in deep thought, a faint smile of triumph, which only those who knew him well could detect, lurking the while in his otherwise imperturbable countenance. At length rousing himself, he brought the interview to an abrupt close, telling the envoy that he would give him his answer in the morning. As the knight withdrew, he rubbed his hands gleefully, saying, half aloud:

"At last! Truly my judgment has proved correct, and my patience is duly rewarded. Right closely will I hold this proud Comes to his undertaking, when

once this peasant rabble shall have been dispersed. Also, we shall see whether Uladislaus will still dare forbid the alliance of his daughter to the son of the only prince capable of maintaining order in his kingdom;" and, leaping to his feet, he immediately set about his preparations for marching to the succor of Temesvar; for though he had deferred announcing his decision until the morrow, it had in reality been taken long ere the messenger had ceased speaking.

In a week's time the Vayvode was ready to set out with a strong body of well-equipped troops at his back, and Michael Dobozy gladly accompanied him, for he had become gravely anxious for the safety of his father and sister, not knowing whether or not Marot had been attacked and taken by the all-victorious rebels. The Spaniard was not, however, to be of the party, having, at his host's request, agreed to remain behind to look to the safety of his daughter, Joanna, who, later on, when the country had become somewhat more settled, he was to escort to Buda. The idea of this man's being left under the same roof with Izolda, now entirely alone and unprotected, did not please Michael, but he was powerless to prevent.

With no unnecessary delay, the Transylvanian ruler led his troops to the relief of the hard pressed garrison of Temesvar, and, with such reinforcements as the rallying forces of the nobles brought to his aid, he was soon in readiness to give battle to Dózsa and his army. This time it was the peasants who met with utter defeat. Their undisciplined forces were broken and scattered, while all their leaders, in-

cluding Dózsa, found themselves prisoners in the hands of the victors.

The peasant rebellion was at an end, but not until the soil of Hungary had been drenched with the blood of fifty thousand of her inhabitants, and the end of its horrors had not yet come. Szapolyai, as the savior of the nobility, was now all paramount in their counsels, and with no merciful hand proceeded to execute judgment upon the unfortunate captives who had led the ill-starred struggle for liberty. As a preliminary, Gregory Dózsa, brother of the peasant commander, was beheaded, while the remainder were thrown like rats into prison and left to live or die as they might, all nourishment being denied them. This plan most effectively lightened the labors of the farcical tribunal, which some days later undertook the task of trying the survivors, who, by that time, were reduced to but a handful. These few unfortunates were shortly despatched with inhuman cruelties.

CHAPTER XVI.

DE GAUL'S REVENGE.

Meanwhile, how fared it with Izolda? She had with the keenest anxiety watched the departure of the armed bands of the Vayvode, which, though none told her, she knew all too well must be destined to do battle against her father. She also knew that Michael Dobozy had accompanied the force and while she prayed God for the protection and safe deliverance of her father from the hands of his enemies, she felt constrained to also add a petition for the safety of the one she so hopelessly loved, and that disaster might not come upon the cause he held just. It by no means lessened her anxiety to find that Don Cardenio was still an inmate of the castle, of which fact she was ere long most unpleasantly reminded.

The morning following the departure of the little army, she had ascended to the top of the keep and stood looking over the battlements at the glorious panorama, which stretched out for miles to the view. Upon every side rose high mountains on whose rugged sides clung thick growths of underbrush, while great forests of tall trees covered the lower slopes and valleys. Here and there in the distance, standing sentinel-like upon some high crag, a tall

bare trunk which had been blasted by the lightning of some summer's storm, formed pleasing contrast to the leafy myriads around, and not a few cleared spaces could be seen, covered with yellow waving grain awaiting the thrusting in of the sickle. All lay in smiling peacefulness, a marked contrast to those other regions of the same kingdom beyond the mountains, where man's unbridled passions had transformed an earthly paradise into a wilderness of ruin, and where there was indeed wailing and gnashing of teeth,—a veritable place of the lost.

The maiden stood absorbed in thought, but could we have read what was passing in her mind, we would find that it was not the artistic splendor of the view which now was uppermost,—in fact she could scarce be said to see that which her eyes rested upon;—instead her thoughts were busy with conjecture as to what was taking place beyond those far off western peaks, which reared their heights as though determined to shut off forever all communication with the world beyond. She, the while, riveted her eyes upon them as though she would pierce their huge bulk and discern what lay upon the farther side. In the midst of her deep reverie, she was startled by a voice at her elbow—a voice not strange, and which spoke in soft accent, in which, however, the hearer quickly detected veiled menace, even as the velvet paw of the cat but hides the claw as she tantalizes the captive mouse.

"The morning's greetings to thee, fair Izolda. I perceive that you delight to indulge the artistic taste

by close scrutiny of this delightful landscape. Art thou also a pupil of the great masters or is it but the acquired taste, born of communion with a kindred spirit?" The last words were spoken with emphasis by the Spaniard, who meanwhile directed a malicious look full in the face of the distressed maiden, as she slowly turned her head to see the intruder. She made no response to his greeting or insinuating inquiry, but gazed at him in a sort of shrinking terror, which highly amused her tormentor.

"Come, my fair one," he continued, "look not so forlorn. 'Tis the fashion of our fair ladies of Castile, when their cavaliers go forth to the battle, to while away the time of waiting for their return, in light pleasure with such less fortunate ones as remain behind, returning to their allegiance when their rightful lord appear; or, if the fortunes of war permit it not, then are they already furnished with his substitute, and have no need to spend time in useless tears at his untimely end. Why not follow such illustrious example, sweet Izolda, and permit me to offer myself as the humble representative of your artist knight, while the time hangs heavily? The task will be far from a displeasing one to me, and I will devote myself most loyally to it. Am I permitted a caress?" and he took a step nearer. The girl drew back, and her previous timidity seemed all to vanish in the strong indignation which possessed her, while the high spirit of the Magyar race made itself manifest as the hot blood mounted to her face and forehead.

"Touch me not!" she cried. "You know full well

that I am but a simple peasant maid and know naught of noble lovers, and you do but strive to play with me, who am alone and unprotected. Come not near me, but go and seek your pleasure in more fitting company."

Cardenio laughed maliciously, then changed his tactics and spoke again in his softest and most persuasive tones.

"Hear me now, Izolda and be not so angry with me, whose only crime lies in being ravished by thy sweet grace. If it is indeed true that he who has so shortly departed is not a lover, then perhaps you will the more readily listen unto me. Your most beauteous face and form did captivate my heart entirely, when first I gazed upon such loveliness, and I do pine for love of you. My manner of wooing may have seemed rough and rude to you but remember that I am a stranger here and understand not the ways of the Hungarian maidens. Wilt forgive me, and bestow upon me at least one glance of thy favor?"

"I am but a simple maid, Sir Spaniard, and know naught of such matters; but if I have at all found favor with you, grant me the boon that you now leave me, and do not, I pray you, trouble further your thoughts about a poor peasant girl."

"Not so," persisted he, "I much doubt me that those dark eyes are all so innocent as you would have it, and if I knew but more of the manners of your country, my task might be the easier. Come, receive me as your lover, and prate no more of low and high estate. I know that, if report be true, the maid whose

name you bear soared e'en so high in her amours, as to have a royal lover. But he was after all not gentle born, while I forsooth, can boast the proudest blood of a long line of pure Castilians ; though what difference that need make with our passing pleasure, I perceive not." And again he made a step toward her.

Izolda sprang out of his reach, while the red blood mounted to her cheeks and she drew herself up proudly, and with clenched hands and flashing eyes looked with utmost contempt upon the gallant before her.

"Leave me, thou shameless braggart, and trouble me with no more of such base wooing. My grandame's love was at least pure, and he upon whom she bestowed it held her in all honor, such as thou, it would seem, know nothing of. Away, I say, for thy very presence does pollute the air."

Don Cardenio ground his teeth in rage, while the picture presented by the resolute and indignant maid served but to fan his passion ; but he controlled himself to argue yet again.

"Consider a moment before you tempt me too far. There is none here to aid you and did I so desire force might readily accomplish that which you so foolishly deny. Once more I pray you, be kind to me, and I swear to be also kind to you."

A scornful laugh burst from her lips.

"You speak truly, that I am all unaided, else such a coward as you would not be here to torment me. I would that my father's strong arm, instead of being

wielded for his peasants, were but here for a moment. He would shake you like a dog doth a rat or other vermin, and in truth, if he has found our Hungarian nobles to be such as you, he doth well to rid the kingdom of so many. But think not that I am all helpless, because alone; for sooner than submit to one caress, I will spring from the battlements, into the moat beneath. Now verily do I speak truth."

One glance at that determined figure was sufficient to satisfy that she would prove true to her word, and for a moment the baffled Castilian was tempted to put her to the test; but her reference to her father had given him a new thought, and his anger subsided as he gloated over it.

"As you will, rash maid," he said. "Not long hence you will rue the day that you listened not, when I spake you fair, and the father of whom you now boast will curse the daughter who forbore to use her charms to purchase his escape from cruel death. For know you, that I will yet control his fate. Once more, I ask you, shall I go or stay?"

"Go, go!" was her prompt response, though as he turned and left the turret, she wondered much what this mysterious reference to her father might mean. Was it but empty boast, or had he aught of authority for what he spake? Turning her face once more toward the mountains, the well-nigh distracted girl stretched out her arms in mute appeal as though imploring those silent witnesses to take her and hide her from her sorrows in their deep recesses.

Another week went slowly by, during which Izolda

to her great relief saw nothing of the Spaniard, who meantime was devoting his attention to the Lady Joanna; and now, having received assurance that they might travel in safety, as the Transylvanian forces lay between their route and the rebel hordes, he made preparations to depart for Buda, and Dózsa's daughter, to her surprise, was told she must accompany them. Under a small escort headed by Cardenio, they accordingly set forth and reached the capital without adventure. Here having established his charge in safe quarters, the Spaniard learned of Szapolyai's great victory over the rebels, and at once set out to join the army, still keeping the unwilling Izolda in his train, to whom, however, he deigned not to open his lips during all their journeying.

Ere long they reached the victorious army's camp, and having secured a dilapidated hut in which to confine his prisoner, de Gaul went immediately to interview the Vayvode, who was even at the moment in counsel with the nobles concerning the fate of the few prisoners who survived the starvation which had proved fatal to the great majority. It had just been decided to leave them to the same cruel fate, which a day or two's longer confinement would be sure to bring them, when the Spaniard secured the ear of Szapolyai for a few moments, and engaged him in earnest conversation. Shortly the Vayvode nodded an assent and turning to his companions announced that he had a better plan for ridding them of the traitors,—one which would have powerful effect in deterring the peasantry from any further outbreak,

and forthwith acquainted them with the details of the proposition, which de Gaul had just suggested to him. All gave assent, though more than one shuddered as he listened.

Straight from the council tent, the Spaniard hurried back to Izolda's prison, and entered to have speech with her. After regarding her fixedly for a few moments in silence, he said.

"I come to again offer you caresses, O sweet Izolda; and with them I offer such a boon as it falls not to the lot of every lover to bestow. Know that I have power to procure the release of thy father, George Dózsa, though he has been condemned to death for his crimes. Will that not tempt you to receive me into those lovely arms?"

The poor girl at first knew not what to say, but in a moment answered sadly.

"If indeed you have this power, be merciful, I pray you, and allow not the innocent to suffer. For innocent is he of aught but desire to help his fellow men. Do so, and though I cannot give you love, yet would I gladly be your slave and will revere your name always."

"Not so," came the quick response. "I pose not as a knight-errant, and desire not reverence. 'Tis the reward of pleasures with thee that I do crave. Make choice quickly. It is *life or death?*" and he laid cruel emphasis upon those two words.

Again the maiden strove to move him with entreaties, but he would none of it and still pressed for

answer to his terms, and at last sobbing as she spoke, these noble words were uttered.

"To my brave father, I know full well that the honor of his child is far more precious than his life, and though I would gladly die for him, yet will I make the choice I know that he would bid: and since you will have it,—Death! yes, Death! I say." And once more left alone, the rebel leader's forlorn child took refuge on her knees.

For two or three hours, Izolda was alone with her bitter thoughts, then to her surprise Cardenio again presented himself before her. She, calmer now, waited in dull despair to hear what fresh torture he had come to inflict, though, in spite of herself, she could not resist the thought that in his return there might be perhaps some ray of hope. He entered quietly and the tone in which he addressed her was in marked contrast to that which he had at other times employed.

"Izolda, I come to crave forgiveness for the wrong which I have done you and for tormenting you so cruelly, when speaking of that brave soldier your father, and my only excuse,—though I press it not—must be that I was bereft of reason through love of thee; but I am now happily come to my senses again. When I last went from this place, I felt I could not let you live to bestow a caress upon any other, and swore lasting vengeance against you and all you loved; but as I grew calmer and thought in cool blood of the crime I was determined to allow to be

committed, I soon knew that I would indeed be the most miserable of men, did I permit harm to come to such a noble patriot as George Dózsa. I accordingly visited the Vayvode, and am come to tell you that even now the father you love so well is being released from his prison. For this I ask no reward, but that you will now have faith in the sincerity of my love even though you continue to spurn it."

The astonished maiden could at first scarce believe her ears ; then, as she grasped the import of his words, she burst into tears of joy and between her sobs strove to pour out her thanks to the kind benefactor whom she had so misjudged.

"But where is he?" she cried. "Will he come hither, or must I go to him? Oh the joy of seeing his dear face once more!"

"If you will permit, I will even now lead you to him," was the response.

For answer she strode to the door, and together they passed through the camp and made for the open space in the center toward which at the same time many could be seen pressing their way, and where a great concourse had already gathered. As they reached the outer ranks of the multitude, de Gaul authoritatively called upon all to make way, and as some hastened not to obey, he cried aloud.

"Make way. Way, I say, for the daughter of Dózsa!"

At this all looked with interest, and a wide avenue was quickly opened for their progress, and as they pressed within the circle they found themselves close

beside the Vayvode and other leaders of the troops. At that moment a great shout went up from the assembled crowds; and all eyes were directed toward a group of strange figures, who just then entered the open space from the farther side.

Some dozen human beings, gaunt and hollow eyed, in rags almost to nakedness, the skin hanging loosely upon their bones, some tottering from weakness as they moved along, while at their head was one tall and more commanding than the rest, who strode firmly and proudly, despite his evident weakness. On him, all eyes were centered, and with them Izolda's, who, as they rested there, cried aloud:—"My father!" and would have flown to meet him; but both her hands were seized in an iron grip, and all her efforts to free herself were vain. Caring not to learn who had thus made her prisoner, she stood gazing at the wreck of her loved father, as with his companions he made his way across the opening, and as he did so she began to be conscious of other objects in that enclosure. Close beside Szapolyai was a rude iron structure in the semblance of a throne, heated to redness by a fierce fire which burned beneath, while all about stood a strong guard of soldiers and others pressed closely up to the wretched prisoners. At once it flashed across the poor girl's brain that she had been beguiled hither to witness the execution of her loved one, and becoming again conscious of the pain in her wrists from the fierce grasp of the one who still held her, she turned for a moment to encounter the cruel gaze of the Spaniard, who stood gloating in

triumph over his victim, while he held her securely to guard against escape.

"Ha," he hissed in her ear. "Did I not tell you that your father was released? And ere many minutes, his soul will also be released from that unlovely body and go to meet its just deserts." And he fixed upon her such a look of diabolical hate as she felt must haunt her until her dying hour. Turning quickly away without response, she soon became unconscious of all save the dreadful tragedy which was now being enacted before her.

The captives had now reached a spot immediately in front of the nobles and were here brought to a stand; while an officer of the guards stepped forth, and first saluting the Vayvode, thus addressed the rebel chief.

"George Dózsa, you have in sacrilegious revolt, sought to overturn the throne of our Hungarian monarch, but have, fortunately for this fair kingdom, failed. The judges, therefore, who have, by our noble King Uladislaus, been appointed to mete out punishment for the crimes committed against him, have mercifully decided that it were wise to give you and your fellow conspirators, also any who would emulate you, sure evidence that the royal seat is not so readily overturned, and also to gratify, even if it be but in the hour of death, the ambition which you have doubtless nursed, to find yourself enthroned. Have you aught to say in gratitude for these honors?"

Dózsa maintained an impassible silence, observing

which, the officer gave a sign to some half-dozen stout guards, who seized him and threw him upon the red-hot structure, while others drew an iron rod from the glowing coals and pressed it into his hands, as his tormentor continued :

"Here you have that outward sign of authority, which all rulers wield,—a sceptre."

The rebel chief uttered no cry of pain and submitted all unresistingly to his doom, while a sickening odor of burning flesh went up from his tortured frame. The leader of the guards now turned his attention to the remaining captives, and cried :

"Now, jackals, smell the sweet perfume of roasting meat which your stomachs, I doubt not, have craved for these ten days past. Help now yourselves before it is overdone, and remember that the bullock is he who has led you to this extremity."

Thus goaded, and beside themselves with famine, the maddened captives sprang upon their leader, and tearing his flesh from off his bones, sought to eat of it. Then, and then only, did Dózsa open his lips and exclaim :

"Hounds, verily ! Yea, and of mine own training!"

Izolda, meantime, had stood transfixed with horror, a dumb spectator of the awful scene, and now, with a shriek of agony, she fell senseless at the feet of her fiendish persecutor, who, with a loud laugh, spurned her with his foot as she fell, and turned carelessly away.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PURSUIT.

On the defeat of the peasantry, Michael Dobozy hurried to Marot to ascertain how matters fared there. To his great relief, the castle stood uninjured though he learned that it had been more than once threatened. The news he received within was, however, not so favorable; for there he found his sister Anna in tears and inconsolable over the death of their father, which had taken place some three weeks before, as a result of a wound received in the first conflict between rebels and nobles. The young man strove to forget his own sincere grief at the death of his loved parent in endeavoring to console his sister, and in the assumption of other responsibilities which now devolved upon him as Comes of Marot.

He found the affairs of his estate in a most sorry plight. Owing to the troubles, little or no reaping had been done, and the peasants' cottages were for the most part deserted, though here and there he found one occupied by the women and children, half starved, and evidently in constant dread of some greater evil than had yet befallen. In several cases he shrewdly suspected that the head of the family was not far off, and he took pains to speak as con-

ciliatingly as possible, and to assure the wife that her husband would be gladly welcomed back, and as far as he was able, protected from the consequences of his rash conduct. In others, it was all too evident that the bread-winner had been slain and pitiful indeed was it to observe the labored attempts to appear unconcerned of the widow and orphans at his approach, lest they should betray their sorrow and be driven out for their connection with one who had been rebel to the state. To all these Michael strove to show that he was a friend rather than an enemy, and wished no better than that the mistakes of the past be forgotten and forgiven on both sides, and that a fresh start be made in the roles of master and dependent. But he found it no easy task to overcome the suspicions engendered by the misunderstandings and injustice of generations, or to bridge over the still gaping breach so recently made between them; and night after night he returned to the castle, worn, dejected and heart-sore, but feeling ever that he dare not shirk the issue.

In a few days, persistent reports began to reach him of the cruelties which were being perpetrated upon the now scattered and demoralized peasantry, and of the awful death by slow starvation, which was being meted out to the unfortunate leaders captured by the loyal troops. This brought to his remembrance the promise he had made to Izolda, that he would do his utmost to protect her father from the vengeance of his foes, and though he had scarcely the slightest hope of being able to influence the

victorious nobles to abate one jot the punishment of which they had adjudged Dózsa worthily, he immediately set out for the camp of the Vayvode, determined to use every effort to redeem his promise, upbraiding himself meanwhile for not having earlier seen to it. On entering the camp, he was soon aware that something unusual was transpiring. Quiet reigned everywhere except on the open plain without the lines, where all the camp seemed to have gathered. Dismounting, he hurried quickly toward the concourse and made his way through the press, arriving at the inner circle just in time to witness the cruel fate of Dózsa and his wretched companions.

Michael stood for some moments horror-stricken, and powerless to remove his gaze from the hateful spectacle, until a loud scream almost beside him diverted his attention. Turning quickly, he saw the now orphaned daughter of the unfortunate Dózsa sink to the ground, and also witnessed the fiendish action of de Gaul, as he kicked the prostrate form. With a cry of "Coward!" he sprang to seize the departing Spaniard, who, recognizing his pursuer, cast upon him one look of mingled hate and rage, and eluding his grasp set off at topmost speed. Dobozy, entangled in the crowd lost ground, and after a few strides gave up the chase, reflecting that he might safely leave it for the present, as Cardenio would doubtless, if left alone, not go from the camp. He therefore determined to first do what he might to assist his victim, and later turn his attention to hunting down her persecutor, to whom he vowed in his

heart, he would show no quarter. Raising the unconscious girl in his arms, he carried her into a peasant cottage at no great distance, where, happily he found a woman who appeared no stranger to a sick bed, and ably seconded him in his efforts to restore the maid to life. After long suspense their labors were rewarded by some signs of awakening consciousness, and being assured by the peasant wife that all would now be well, he decided to leave her in such good care, while he sought out the man whom he burned with impatience to measure weapons with.

He had no difficulty in learning of the movements of Cardenio who, to his chagrin, he found had quitted the camp almost immediately after the execution and had ridden westward. Securing his own horse he mounted and rode forth in hot pursuit. Hour after hour he rode on, and to all his inquiries from those whom he met he received the same response,—that his quarry was still far in the lead, pushing onward at full speed. This surprised him not a little, and forced the conclusion that after all the Spaniard was far more of an arrant coward than he had given him credit for, and a great contempt for the fellow grew upon him. Far into the night he forced on his flagging steed, until at length he was compelled, reluctantly, to halt for refreshment for both himself and beast. By early morning he was in the saddle again and once more pressing in keen pursuit. All day he rode and still the Spaniard was well in the lead, bending his course more northward, until Michael realized that if this route were still adhered

to, it would lead them almost directly to Marot, and toward night the familiar landscape began to appear. He now determined that he would spend the night within his castle, and procuring fresh mount continue his quest at dawn, so rode steadily forward in the gathering gloom. Darkness came on while he was still several miles from its gates, and as he still pressed forward, he heard the sound of hoofs approaching upon the hard road ahead, and peering forward made out two shadowy shapes hurrying toward him. He slackened his pace wondering who could be the horsemen upon such urgent business bent, and debating whether or not to attempt to halt them to put his usual queries regarding the Spaniard. On came the riders at full gallop, and when they were just abreast of him a sharp report rang out, a bright flash, and then a pistol ball whizzed past his head so closely as to graze his hat. Ere he was quite conscious of what was happening, the strangers thundered by, leaving him in the center of the road, debating whether it were wiser to give chase to these new assailants or to continue upon his quest. He quickly decided that with his jaded beast he would have little prospect of overhauling the horsemen, the hoof-beats of whose steeds were already becoming faint in the distance, so continued his way toward his castle of Marot where he soon arrived, and entering sought for his sister Anna.

Going straight to his sister's apartments, he was surprised to find all in confusion and apparently deserted. Wearing apparel and other articles were

tossed haphazard about the rooms, showing plainly that the occupant had but recently taken a very hasty flight. Puzzled, and in vague fear of some new disaster, the Comes called aloud his sister's name and receiving no response rushed toward the lower part of the building, to ask an explanation of his steward. On the stairway he almost overturned a serving maid, who was coming in response to his calls.

"Tell me quickly," he demanded; "what has happened and whither has my sister, the lady Anna, departed?"

The girl looked at him with wide, staring eyes, and blanched cheeks, but uttered not a word.

"Speak, and say quickly, I bid you!" he repeated. She strove to answer, but her labored breathing choked her utterance.

"The Spanish knight!" she gasped, then stopped, unable to speak further, while Michael, all on fire with impatience, strode to and fro waiting for her to proceed.

At length from her few disjointed sentences, he gathered sufficient to obtain a fairly clear idea of what had happened; and it dawned upon him that Cardenio was fulfilling to the uttermost his promise of vengeance, with a desperation and refinement of cruelty which he could scarcely credit. According to the excited girl's story, the Spaniard had ridden up to the castle gates an hour previous to his arrival, at a furious pace and demanded admittance in the name of its master. His sister Anna, with whom de Gaul had stood in high favor, bade that he be ad-

mitted, received him gladly, and would have feasted him right royally; but he refused all offer of refreshment, announcing that he came as the bearer of evil tidings, and had also a message from the Comes to his sister. The scattered peasants had, he said, re-united after their defeat and falling upon the forces of the nobles unawares, had again completely routed them and were once more devastating the country with sword and torch. He, with Michael, had fought all day long, after which they had together succeeded in reaching a place of safety, though he grieved to say that the lady Anna's brother had been severely wounded. After consulting together, it had been agreed that he,—de Gaul—should endeavor to make his way to Marot if at all possible, and escort its mistress to a place of safe retreat, ere the blood-thirsty peasantry should arrive to wreck the castle, as they most assuredly would, and in conclusion he prayed her to make all possible haste to prepare for her hurried flight, while he from the stables secured the two best mounts available. They had departed, the maid concluded, not more than half an hour since.

During the slow recital, Michael groaned, again and again. All too well, he understood now who the two riders were, whom he had encountered in the road, and why that shot had been fired at him as they rode madly by. Not content with the evil he had already accomplished, the villainous Spaniard had determined to strike him through his sister, the abduction of whom he had accomplished with ease by the invention of this plausible story, and had carried

out his design with a boldness that was more than startling. His first impulse was to rush off in hot pursuit; but, reflecting that he would in the end have better chance of overtaking the fugitives, did he tarry to take the sorely needed rest and refreshment, which the Spaniard had not dared to, he restrained his impatience and first proceeded to put an end to the panic which had seized all the household. This was by no means an easy task, but was at length accomplished by dint of stern commands to each to be about their ordinary occupations, while haste was made to provide something for his refreshment, meanwhile giving a flat denial to the lying story of the Spaniard. He also called upon two of his most tried and trusty retainers to make ready to accompany him in pursuit of the abductor and his victim, and to select the three freshest horses in the stable. This done, and having refreshed himself with meat and drink, he forced himself to take a couple of hours' rest, though sleep he could not.

Long ere morning had commenced to dawn he was again upon the road, and the next two days and nights were but a repetition of the two preceding. The fugitives were following the course of the river Danube, as it flowed on with ever increasing volume in its southward journey, and it early flashed into Michael's comprehension, that Cardenio purposed if possible to make his escape into Turkish territory,—and this once accomplished, he could defy his pursuers. As this dawned upon him, he shuddered to think of what the fate of his sister might be, did he

not overtake and rescue her ; and he determined that if necessary he would continue the pursuit even to the capital of the fierce Selim. Of rest, he could take none himself, and would scarcely take time for the needed refreshment of his own and companions' steeds.

Toward evening of the second day, as they reached the brow of a low hill, and gained an unobstructed view for some distance, he was overjoyed to see the objects of his search at no great distance in advance, and he began to feel that his enemy was already in his grasp, as he noted that the horse he rode showed unmistakable signs of being well nigh done, though that of his companion still held bravely on. With a shout the pursuers urged on their beasts as they hurried to overhaul their prey. The evening breeze bore the sound to the ears of the fugitives, who turned a backward glance, and, it was plain, recognized them. But while the Spaniard strove to put greater speed into his flagging mount, Anna made as though to turn to meet them. Detecting this, her companion laid a detaining hand upon her rein, but whatever his argument, it failed to convince, for the girl pulled her horse up short and refused to proceed further. The Spaniard also halted and seemed to parley, then in a moment the pursuers were horrified to see him suddenly draw forth a dagger. A moment it flashed on high, then descended into the breast of the poor maiden, who had been so sadly deceived. As the murdered girl fell from her horse, de Gaul quickly effected an exchange of mounts, and with a derisive

shout to his pursuers, put spurs into the flanks of the comparatively fresh steed and galloped on.

In a frenzy, Michael Dobozy dismounted at the side of his dying sister, who had but strength to gasp, "Michael," then expired in his arms. Laying the bleeding corpse gently upon the earth, the stricken brother arose and with a cry of mingled agony and vengeance sprang into his saddle and started in hot pursuit of the rapidly receding assassin. In a few moments he had overtaken his companions, who had continued onward, but in a short space they drew rein and implored him to give up the chase, supporting their demand by directing his attention to a strong body of Turks, who had just appeared upon the horizon, and toward whom de Gaul was directing his flight. At first Michael would hear of no abandonment of the pursuit, declaring that he was ready to meet death at the hands of the infidels, and that gladly, if he could but first draw blade upon his foe. But as he still persisted, the Spaniard joined the troop and was it seemed received in all friendliness, while after a moment's halt the infidels bore down upon his three foes. At this Michael reluctantly gave over his design, and retreating rapidly they took up the body of his sister. After a sharp chase, aided by the darkness which now came on apace, they succeeded in eluding their pursuers, who were evidently a marauding party, emboldened by the unsettled condition of the country to press their depredations into Hungarian territory.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A QUEST.

Dejected and heart-broken, Michael Dobozy returned to his castle of Marot, bearing all that remained of the sister he had loved so well. Twice in short space had his soul been wrung by the violent death of those he loved, and the castle, with its many reminders of the past, now seemed hateful to him. In his misery his thoughts returned to Izolda, and remembering in what sorry plight he had left that poor maid, he set out for the peasant cottage, where she had been carried by him ere he had begun his pursuit of the Spaniard. The camp of the nobles had been shifted and nothing now remained to mark the spot where such a cruel tragedy had so recently been enacted. He hurried to the cottage and inquired of the peasant woman how fared it with her charge; but was surprised and alarmed to learn that she knew nothing of her whereabouts. The day following his departure, Izolda had seemed quite herself once more, and telling the woman that she had no further need of her care, had departed,—she knew not whither. Doubtless, suggested the friendly peasant, she had gone back to her own people.

What a pang that simple suggestion sent through

the soul of the young Comes. Alas, poor Izolda! Death, which had so sorely afflicted him, had been even more vengeful toward her. Not only was she now alone in the world, but also she had no place she might call her home. However, the suggestion might be worth following up, and he accordingly returned to the village of Marot, or at least to what remained of that once peaceful hamlet. The house of Gregory Zach had, he remembered, been razed and as far as known, all his family had been slain. He made closest inquiry of the few remaining villagers, but could learn naught of Izolda. None had seen her since the day after he, with the Spanish stranger, had visited the village one evening, months before. In fact, it had been currently reported that she had gone away with the foreigner. Sick at heart, Dobozy turned from the village and betook himself once more to his castle, where he remained for several days, sunk in blank despair.

Suddenly, it occurred to him that the distracted girl might have endeavored to find her way back to her father's home in Transylvania, of the destruction of which by the Vayvode she had not been told; and full of pity for the forlorn and unprotected maiden he decided to journey thither in hope of finding some trace of her, and at once set out. His journey was not without danger, for although all organized resistance on the part of the peasantry was at an end, yet small bands still roamed the country, and, rendered desperate by the treatment accorded to prisoners by the nobles, had in some cases established themselves

in secluded regions, whence they could sally forth to attack and plunder at will. More than once he was in danger of his life, and debated whether or not he should abandon his project and retrace his steps, reflecting, that where he found such difficulty, the helpless girl could never have made her way. But leave her fate in uncertainty, he felt he could not, so pushed on and in time drew near familiar scenes.

Here and there were spots which called up memories of pleasures years agone, when Izolda and he had been playmates together, and now he passed the spot where a few weeks since, on the eve of the peasants' uprising, he had found the maid in such woeful plight, and with more woeful tale to tell. At last the ruins of the once pleasant home of Dózsa were before him, and he began to cast about for some one to whom he might put his almost hopeless inquiries for any tidings of the ill-fated leader's daughter. But all seemed deserted and silent as the grave; no animal life was visible and even the birds of the air appeared to shun the desolate spot.

Riding aimlessly, he moved close up to the ruins, and while his horse wandered at will, became lost in a sad reverie, thinking of the ruin and destruction which had swept like a summer's storm over his unfortunate country, and of the injustice and oppression which had been responsible for it all. Suddenly, he was aroused by hearing a sound as of singing in a low voice close at hand. He looked about, but could see no one. The sound, however, seemed to

proceed from the opposite side of a heap of ruins close at hand. Dismounting, he walked around in order to see and have speech with the singer. Just as he caught sight of a head above the loose stones which concealed the remainder of a recumbent figure, his foot caught in a projecting root and he fell heavily. There was a sharp cry, and in a moment a naked dagger flashed close before his eyes, which he closed involuntarily, expecting to feel the cold steel entering his flesh the next moment. But the blow came not; instead, he heard the metal rattle as it fell upon the stones beside him. Opening his eyes again, he saw standing before him a gypsy girl, whom he quickly recognized as the daughter of Andreas, the strolling musician.

"Why, Clara," he exclaimed. "What do you here? I had thought of a surety, that my end was come. Since when have you taken to greeting your friends in such fashion?"

"I thought you not a friend," she answered simply, then, as he arose, motioned him to follow her.

Going among the ruins, close up against the high cliff against which the back of Dózsa's house had stood, she forced a way through the bushes and vines which here grew in profusion, and he, following her, found himself at the entrance of a cavern or tunnel which ran into the mountain side. As he entered, a huge form, as it seemed to him, of a giant, sprang up as though to fall upon him, then hesitated and drew back. Other than this he could discern nothing at

first in the gloom, but as his eyes grew accustomed to the dim light he could make out other objects and began to look about him.

We have seen the interior of that hiding place before; and as Michael makes his survey now, it has altered little, save that it shows evidence of more recent occupation. The giant form which his entrance had disturbed, now dwindled down into a peasant of ordinary proportions, whom he recognized as one from his own lands,—Gabriel, the son of Gregory Zach, and cousin to Izolda. The sight of him gave fresh life to his well-nigh abandoned hope, and he eagerly questioned him if he knew or had heard aught of the lost maiden. For answer Gabriel motioned toward the back of the cavern, and the young Comes strode quickly to the spot indicated. There, stretched upon a rude couch in the semi-darkness, he made out the form of the one he had so long sought for in vain. With a cry of joy, he knelt beside her and called.

“Izolda! Izolda!”

The form moved slightly while a weak voice faltered.

“Michael! Surely it is the voice of the Comes Michael, which calls. How came he hither?”

It cut him to the heart to hear that voice,—once so full, round, and musical in its tones,—speak so weakly and brokenly. Now also he was able to make out the profile, and it appeared to him that even in that twilight he could mark how woefully thin and worn the beautiful face had grown.

"O Izolda," he cried, "it grieves me sore to see you thus. What new evil has befallen you, and how came you to this far distant place?"

"After I saw my noble father's awful death," came the response, in low broken tones, "there could be naught for me but to die also. But of a sudden there came over me the longing to come back to the once happy home and scene of my childhood joys, and here to lay me down and die. How I dragged myself hither I know not, or what way I came I cannot tell. All was a wild and fearsome dream until I stood and looked upon the spot where that home should be, and saw instead but a heap of crumbling ruins. Then I thought I died; but Clara, the good Tzigana girl, found me and brought me hither where Gabriel also lay, and by her nursing has put off the day till now; but it cannot be for long."

"Oh, say not so, my sweet Izolda!" and the young man almost sobbed in his agony. "You must not die, but live; for there is joy and happiness yet for you."

"Not so," she said; "I would far rather die. Life can have no more happiness for me, since all who loved poor Izolda, are lost to me."

"All are not gone; for am I not here? And have I not searched these weeks, through mountain and forest, heart broken at your loss? And now that at last I have found my love, she speaks of death! You must not, I cannot, I *will not* let you die!" was the passionate reply.

"You, Michael? *You* speak of love to me? No. You but mock me. For I am but a poor peasant

maid,—the daughter of the reviled and foresworn rebel chief, who has been rewarded for his so called crimes with shameful death; while you are noble born,—the Comes of Marot,—and soon will take to wife the daughter of the Vayvode. Spare me! O spare me this fresh misery, and let me die in peace!"

"Unite myself to the daughter of Szapolyai, that fiend in human form? No, never! But *you*, I must have for mine own, Izolda. Does not your heart tell you that I do truly love you? Yes, and have loved you through all these years since we as children played together among these same hills and forest glades. Be you peasant maid or noble, I care not,—so you belong to *me*!"

At this a wondrous smile lighted up those wan and pinched features.

"Tell me that again, my Michael; for I long have pined for love of thee." And as he stretched forth his arms, she nestled her head against his shoulder and murmured.

"Live? Yes, now I'll live; I'll live for thee!"

But while these two communed in sweet rhapsodies together, that very joy was as bitterness and gall distilled, for one who saw the scene. Gabriel, the peasant youth, from his corner of the cavern, gazed with white, set face, drawn lips and clenched hands, while he groaned within himself and his teeth ground together in suppressed passion.

"Yea," was his thought. "Not content with robbing the poor peasant of his goods, and making him a slave of the soil, he must needs rob him also of

his love. Yet,"—and the true honest soul rose in a grandeur of renunciation,—“for the love I bear the sweet maid, will I gladly see her in his arms, for there will she surely have security and protection, while naught but privation, peril and distress, would be her lot with an outcast peasant.”

And farther toward the entrance of the place, another pair of eyes surveyed the whole scene, and bent their gaze in passionate yearning upon the suffering peasant, while another heart thus communed with itself.

“So. He has no eyes for aught but her who cares not for him, but like that one long dead, whose name she bears, would die for him,—the noble born, who yet may play her false. In that she differs not from the poor foolish Tzigana Clara, who would also gladly die for the strong, brave, young peasant, whose love is thus stolen from before his eyes. Would that I had struck home my knife just now, and silenced in death him who now lives to torture Gabriel Zach! But no, I owe my life to him, and harm I dare not do. So back to mine own people will I go. To linger longer were but to die.” And silently and all unnoticed the gypsy maid glided out and away.

”Twas ever thus. The joy of one brings sorrow to another; while sorrow is but the absence of the joy. Here were two hearts, in readiness to burst with grief, while two others beat fast and could not contain their gladness. We are ready to exclaim, “What a parody is love! What a mockery is life! What an angel in disguise is death!”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "TRIPARTITE CODE."

The great national Diet of Hungary has been summoned by the wearer of St. Stephen's triple crown, to meet at Buda. Sweeping measures for the welfare of the kingdom are to be submitted for the consideration of the nobles, who are drawn together from east, west, north and south of that once goodly land,—now so sadly devastated. What nameless horrors gather in the train of that grim and awful demon War! The air, once so pure, seems now to reek with carrion, while the soil is drenched with the blood of those whose strong arms should by tillage have relieved it of its fruits. Civil war,—of all wars most horrible,—has had its cruel lust for blood satiated to the full in this stricken land, since last this great concourse gathered in Buda's halls; and many who then sat in council are now rotting into dust, while the lives of fifty thousand peasants have gone to pay the forfeit, and the wail of the widow and the fatherless is heard throughout the length and breadth of these broad plains and in the inmost recesses of those towering hills. But the black pall which had settled over the land is lifting at last. Peace once more spreads her wings throughout its borders, and law

and order again prevail. Measures are now to be enacted, which shall forever insure exemption from civil strife, and the reign of peace shall be a lasting one.

Stephen Verboczy, the talented and wise Chief Justice of the kingdom, is to propound laws which shall insure harmony and justice to all, and shall render his name famous and remembered for ages yet to come. Surely, a Solomon is he! For wisdom of supreme rank is that, which makes it law, that all men are equal. No noble, whatsoever his estate, shall be considered the superior of his brother, save in that superiority which merit alone bestows, while in his just rights he is defended against exaction, from even the wearer of the crown himself. The clergy, likewise, must not presume unduly upon their sacred office. They, too, must be subject to this law of general equality. No noble's goods can be wrenched from his unwilling grasp for either Church or State.

Well done, Verboczy! A Solomon in truth is here! And now the peasant: he, surely, is one who will be greatly blessed by this law of equal rights; and, indeed, the dawn of lasting peace has surely broken when the grievous burdens which caused the recent wretched strife, are so effectually removed. Proceed, O most wise and noble Chief Justice!—The peasants! For the peasants we now proceed to legislate.

"The recent uprising, so diabolically conceived and furthered under cloak of a religious expedition, has forever branded the peasant class as faithless and most infamous. Forever have they forfeited all

rights. Henceforth must they, in perpetuity, be bound down to the soil,—not to hold it as their own, but to till it for their masters, against whom no rights at law have they. For he shall, in truth, be their judge in all things pertaining to their ordering, and of the profit of their toil shall he receive all, save that bare sustenance which the peasant and his family may claim,—else he had not strength to labor. But to more than this he shall have no right."

Do our ears perfrom their function? Have we heard aright? Is this the proposition of a man, or fiend? To enslave, in perpetuity, the greater portion of the nation! Surely, 'tis a maniac propounds such an outrageous scheme! And yet, do many openly applaud, while more keep silent, judging this of no concern; and few, few there be who raise the voice of protest.

Michael Dobozy, the young Comes of Marot, sits for a time confounded. He scarce can believe his ears. That injustice, so open and pronounced, can in cold blood be mooted he cannot credit. At length it dawns upon him that this is no crude or hastily conceived production, but rather is the result of careful and deliberate planning to forever crush out all spirit of resistance from the offending peasantry. Silence he can keep no longer, and springing to his feet pours out his heart-felt protest.

In ringing words of passionate appeal he implored the members of the Diet to pause and reflect before they allowed such an infamous enactment to disgrace the statute book of Hungary. In this, their

hour of triumph, surely they could afford to be magnanimous! The peasants had been taught by force that rebellion against established law and authority was futile and but recoiled upon themselves; —and what need was there to press the lesson further? Rather was it the part of wisdom to take such measures, as would tend to heal the breach which had been made between masters and servants, and by making now some small concessions, show to the misguided people that their lords were not nearly so unjust as their leaders had persuaded them. Now was the time to rectify, as far as possible, the mistakes of the past, and to take such steps as would insure for the Hungary of the future peace and unity, such as had existed within her borders in the days of Matthias Corvinus. This could only be accomplished by meting out to the peasant class, treatment, such as would re-establish confidence in their rulers, and teach them that the interests of high and low were mutual,—that an injury to one was an injury to all. Thus, and thus only, might the awful calamity, which had lately fallen upon this fair land, be made a lasting blessing.

“Persist in this iniquitous purpose,” he concluded, “and the dark clouds of despair, which are even now settling over the wretched peasantry, will be deepened into blackest night, and an era of suspicion and distrust, hatred and violence ensue, which shall give to Hungary a backward place in the ranks of the nations, instead of that foremost place to which she is entitled, and which the enterprise of the great Mat-

thias has secured for her. Ponder also well, that the wily Turk is ever at our very doors, so that 'tis but the part of selfish wisdom to keep the people in contentment with their lot, lest they reason that their state can be no worse with foreign lords than under Magyar oppressors, and so rally not to our standard when the struggle comes,—as come it surely will,—and thus we be worsted in the strife. As I did of late travel in other lands, I marked many signs which say to me, as plainly as uttered words could impart, that the great masses of the people are awakening out of sleep, and are groping out for that,—they know not what; but which nameless thing is that freedom which man's inmost nature craves. Why, then, should not we, of the proud Magyar race, lead the van in this, as other matters, and proclaim to the world that in this favored land a man may be a *man*? Extend, O Chief Justice, that most just enactment of equality to the peasant in common with the noble, and your name shall go down to generations yet unborn in veneration;—heed me not, and 'Verboczy' shall be of all names most accursed in the Magyar tongue!"

Michael was all on fire with his theme, and that his fervid appeal had made a deep impression was quite evident as he ceased speaking. But his recent alliance with the daughter of the rebel chief was known to many, and this fact was cunningly used by his opponents to nullify his efforts, while some were found base enough to openly charge that the young Comes had all along been in sympathy with the out-

rages perpetrated by the peasantry, and had secretly encouraged Dózsa in his mad enterprise. So at length the paradoxical "Tripartite Code" becomes the law of the land, and bleeding Hungary has been given yet another wound deeper and more grievous than any she has yet suffered, and which shall cause her to lag behind in the march of progress for centuries to come.

Returning from this meeting of the national council, the lord of Marot seeks the apartments of Izolda, who now holds sway at his castle, and throws himself dejectedly at her feet.

"Why so sad, my Michael?" inquires she in sweet solicitude. "Hath the Diet disappointed you? I know you expected great things from its meeting."

"Yea. Sad and disappointed indeed am I; for where I expected justice and fair dealing, nothing but infamy and wrong seemeth to be tolerated," and glad of a sympathetic listener he rehearsed the proceedings at Buda, commenting bitterly upon the vindictiveness and perversity manifested by the nobles who had there assembled.

Izolda's expressive countenance gave evidence of the keen suffering which the recital of the further oppression in store for the unfortunate peasants caused her; for although she herself, by her union with her lord, had been lifted out of the participation in their misery, yet her heart still went out to those with whom so many years of her life had been spent, and was sore within her as she dwelt upon their wrongs. Throughout the whole of Michael's recital she inter-

rupted not, but when, at the conclusion of his tale, he again broke into passionate invective against the perpetrators of such cruelty, and uttered dark forbodings as to the future of the land, she broke in.

“Repine not, my Michael. There is yet much which you and I can do. Does not this law, which has just been passed, make you the absolute lord and master of the peasantry throughout the whole district of Marot? Then use the power which is just bestowed upon you to uplift and better their condition. The laws, which many in their greed will take advantage of to harrass and oppress, *you* can turn to the lasting benefit of those who are your legal servitors, and by exacting only your just share of the product of their toil, bring joy and gladness to many disheartened ones, and gladly will I do that which I can to help; for are not these my people also?”

“Truly, Izolda, thou art a faithful wife to me and God hath given you a wisdom well matured and power to see the good which in all evil lies. As thou hast spoken,—so let it be, and we will strive our utmost to make the good to swell and the evil to grow less. Who can tell but that in seeing the prosperity and peace which will surely dwell throughout all the lands of Marot, others may come to seek the right, and better days be yet in store for Hungary. In this wise, Dózsa, through his sweet daughter, will have accomplished the deliverance of the peasantry!”

EPILOGUE.

“The legend of the Basaharcz?* Yea; gladly will I unfold the tale to my lord, and a smile from the gentle maiden will well repay me,—I am grateful, my lord. The coin is also not to be despised by poor Andreas,—and you may repose confidence in me that I shall tell faithfully the story which,—mark well—is all most true.

“In journeying through this fair Hungarian land, it has not escaped the notice of my lord, that here and there the ruins of a one-time mosque are seen, and he (far better than a poor Tzigana) knows that there was a time when fierce Turks possessed this land and pressed sore the yoke upon the necks of the brave Magyar race, until at length it pressed so sorely that the captives rose, and, in their might, drove out the infidel intruders. The story which I have to tell, dwells not upon the driving out, but on their rushing in, much more than two hundred years agone. Yea, rather close to three centuries have made their round since that fatal day at Mohacs, when the mighty Solyman crushed so terribly the forces of King Louis and did to death that brave, young monarch himself. False *friends*,—not *foes*—wrought ruin to our Hun-

* Pasha's struggle.

gary, and had left her stripped and almost naked of defense, with a cruel and festering wound to paralyze her strength, so that when the day of battle came she was, perforce, o'erwhelmed.

"Doubtless you know something of that cruel peasant's war which scourged the land some years before and robbed her of the flower of her defenders, and how, from that time on, the nobles,—forgetful of their duty to the throne and kingdom,—did still more cruelly grind and persecute the wretched peasantry, (who were now much worse than slaves), and squeezed, as it were, their heart's blood out, drop by drop, if they could thereby gain even the smallest coin more for their own wasteful spending. Night after night, by some, great feasts were made, and until daylight dawned, high revel ruled, while drunkenness abounded so that half their days were spent in sluggish, boorish sleep. Thus, in shameful wantonness was squandered the fruit of the poor peasant's toil, while he was forced to live, so scantily, that oft his children's cries for bread would be his nightly lullaby.

"If, perchance, the king,—he who wore the triple crown of Stephen,—dared to make requisition for some service from these haughty lords, their response was not prompt obedience, but rather a vying with each other to learn which could be most rude and churlish in his treatment of the sovereign, who, plundered of his revenues by these robber chiefs, was brought well-nigh to beggary. All this, the while the

Turk was on their borders, ever closing in and casting his avaricious eye upon the fertile Alföld, and gathering strength for the final spring at the throats of the weakening Magyars, who ever at their feasts, in fancied security and amid loud bravado, drank 'Death to the Turks' as a nightly ceremony, dreaming, in their childish ignorance, of the days of John Hunyadi, when the Saracen hordes were driven back and made to feel that though all other thrones might fall, that of Hungary was fixed upon a rock impervious to their fierce assaults.

"Sad days, indeed, were those for stricken Hungary still smarting from the gaping wounds caused by the massacre of full fifty thousand of her sturdy peasants,—those wounds which, instead of closing with the healing touch, and salving with the balm of conciliation, were ever torn afresh by the tyranny and gross injustice of those who should have made their work the binding up of her injuries. But not all were such. Some few there were among the noble-born, who saw aright and strove,—but hoplessly, against the 'whelming tide,—to pacify, and to right the wrongs inflicted by the cruel Tripartite laws; but these were few, indeed.

"Such an one was the young Comes of Marot, brave Michael Dobozy, who, with his lady—herself a peasant maid, though 'twas said that in her veins there flowed even royal blood, the bravest of the Magyar kings,—(though of the bar sinister),—bent his every energy to gain justice for the people. In this he well-

nigh lost his life, and his freedom was more than once so darkly threatened, that at length he abandoned the hopeless struggle, but spent his days henceforth in the grand endeavor to make at least those about him happier and free from the crushing pressure of the unjust laws. Much was he beloved by his people, who, while they did execrate the nobles as a class, were yet ready to lay down their lives almost in the service of their young lord and his sweet companion.

"On his estates, even justice reigned for all. The peasants worked, but not unduly, and for their toil received just recompense, while, when the harvest was ingathered, instead of the Comes claiming it for his own and doling out a mere pittance to his starving servitors, he held it theirs, and asked but small and just proportion for himself as lord of the land and holder from the crown. Yet he prospered, and so did they,—and why should it not always be thus between the master and the servant? Our generous mother earth does ever heap most bounteous rewards upon those who till the soil, so that there is much and to spare for all. Then why should any hunger, while the few grow gross with surfeit?

"The doings of the Comes were not looked upon with favor by those nobles, whose sole desire was not the welfare and upbuilding of their native land, but was the rather, the upbuilding of more power, each for himself, regardless of the general good; and some there were, his neighbors, who strove by false

reports and accusations, to stir the people up against him and so frustrate his generous schemes. At the Court, also, whisperings of disloyalty were uttered by those whose own loyalty, to any but themselves, had long been threadbare. And to the Church dignitaries, some even dared to call him heretic, in the hope that he might be cast forth and dispossessed of his lands, while they, perhaps, might profit by their confiscation. But to all this, he, of Marot, paid but little heed, and busied himself,—with the help of his fair wife—in caring for the welfare of his peasantry.

“Then the Turkish Sultan died, and the great Solyman became the leader of those dark hordes, which hovered on the borders of the land. An envoy, sent in peace by him, was treated with gross indignity, and suffered cruel, bodily violence at the hands of some of these haughty nobles,—whether inflamed by wine and with senses deadened to all thought of consequences, or lulled into the confidence of false security in dull ignorance of the woeful weakness of the kingdom, ’twere hard to discern. But from whatever cause the deed was done and a terrible vengeance lay in store for the unfortunate Magyar race.

“Long ere those who had been so eager to bid such rash defiance to the infidel monarch had come to realize their danger, the armed myriads of his wild warriors came thundering at their very gates. They then, in woeful panic, but too late, began to call upon those very peasants whom, by their cruelties and wrongs they had well-nigh made incapable of making

a defense. But when at last, by great endeavor, a few warlike lords had gathered together some scanty thousands, they,—instead of making strength by union—still pursued their petty quarrels among themselves to such purpose that no real stand was made against the invaders, who were everywhere victorious, until the youthful king, more brave than wise, with such force as he could muster, gave unequal battle on the field of Mohacs, where some twenty thousand martyrs,—one the King,—yielded their lives in vain endeavor to save poor Hungary from the retribution for her rulers' sins. And never was work of punishment entrusted to more ruthless inquisitors than those savage Turks, who overran the land, to pillage and destroy as fancy led them. The wretched peasants, disarmed and cowed by their cruel masters, made easy prey for these accomplished butchers, who slew men, women and babes in pitiless unconcern.

" 'Twas then that the brave Dobozy, desperate at the merciless slaughter, and moved to a fierce compassion by the groanings of his beloved people, was fired with an heroic patriotism and desire, if possible, to free his native land from the yoke of the hated tyrants, and determined to take the field himself and make stand against the 'whelming tide. Numbers of the peasantry gathered round his standard, and when at length he faced the foe in the neighborhood of his own castle, he led almost as large an army as that which the king had led at Mohacs,—and led them to as sure a doom. He formed a barricade and hoped

to make a lengthened stand, but the Turkish leader, more skilled in war than he, soon found a way to place his cannon so that they played most disastrously upon his camp, with result that not for long the battle raged before the poor peasants, wild with terror, broke and fled in great disorder, and what had at beginning seemed a fight was now but massacre and butchery.

"The Comes at last was forced to flee, and, with his gentle wife upon the saddle before him, made brave effort to escape, but was pursued most hotly by a score or more. Yet did he hope to attain a place of safety in the mountains close at hand, and to this end urged his panting steed toward the stream which ran between. On, on, they fled, and on, ever on, came the fierce pursuers, and every time Dobozy threw a backward glance it seemed that the distance between was lessening. Well to the front of the pursuing band rode a tall emir, who spared not his black Arab horse one instant, but ever lashed and spurred him on to greater leaps and bounds, while he bent far forward o'er his neck as if in very eagerness to grasp his prey the instant that his hand could reach them.

"Onward and still onward thundered the chase. The stake was life, yea, and more than life to one,—to her who bravely strove to cheer her lord with hopeful words.

"'See, now,' she cries. 'The stream is not far off, and if we can but make the bridge and after passing have but few moments to wreck its frailty, we are not lost!'

"He cast again a backward glance. Yes, a chance remained, for still he held well in the lead. The emir followed close—but that was all the worse for the emir.

"'Come, now, brave steed. Few moments more maintain the unequal race and thou wilt place us and thy sweet mistress in safe retreat from these raging fiends that follow.' And reaching forward, he patted the strong arched neck.

"But even as he spoke the poor beast stumbled and with difficulty maintained his feet, while signs of flagging grew apace. What pained anguish then shot through that noble heart! Must the chase end thus? And must he cruelly perish when so nearly escaped, and in perishing know that his brave, young wife was captive in the hands of these cruel, wanton dogs of the East? Perish he must, but for her there may yet be hope! He pressed the reins into those loved hands and spoke.

"'The beast is well-nigh done and cannot longer carry double. Press on and thou mayest yet escape them, while I dismount and make what fight I may to stay their onward chase until you win the bridge. Make for the hills and do not linger one moment to weep for me. If I but know that thou art safe, death will be robbed of half its terrors.'

"'No! No!' she cried, and seized him tighter round the waist. 'Either we escape or die together! See, our brave charger still presses on, though in sore distress. He yet will save us!'

"Dobozy turned his head once more to mark their

pursuers, and black despair was in his face to see how fast the distance lessened between them and that emir's great Arab steed. 'No hope, no hope,' sounded like a knell within his heart and forced a groan. But even as he groaned the emir's horse swerved, stumbled and fell heavily forward. A figure had sprung up from behind a low bush, and dashing itself full upon the charger's front, had forced his fall, then quickly sprang aside and turned to flee. But the fierce Turk, unhurt and vengeful, was in a moment freed from his struggling mount, and shrieking curses followed, swift of foot and with gleaming blade raised on high, in close pursuit. One short minute only and then that blade descended and cut the fugitive almost in twain. Pausing not for a second look, he turned him back, and, mounting his recovered beast, once more took up the chase, still to the front of his more laggard followers.

"But those few moments were most precious to the fugitives, and once more hope grew up within the heart of the Comes.

"'Courage, Izolda,' he cried. 'We are saved; but at fearful sacrifice. Faithful Andreas, the Tzigana, has repaid my small services with his life. Would that I could but have measured blades with yon assassin in his defence!'

"And now the stream is well-nigh won. A moment more and the hoofs of their gallant steed will clang across the bridge, and there will yet be time to wreck the light causeway ere their pursuers arrive to hinder. They reach the brink; but find no bridge! Theirs

were not the only brains which had conceived this plan of flight. Some scattered peasants had already crossed and balked pursuit by cutting from its moorings the only passage. Blank despair once more settled upon these two noble hearts. The banks were high and between rushed the stream now swollen to an angry torrent, while close behind thundered their relentless foes. Once more the Comes spoke.

"Izolda, thou must leave me. Here will I stay and meet the infidels as they close up. By skillful sword-play I may gain some minutes, while you press quickly onward by the banks. Three miles above there is a ford which the beast, now lightened of my weight, I trust can make ere yet our foes can breast you. My life will here be sold most dearly to them, and your escape made sure."

"Not so, my husband," quoth his mistress. "Life without you would indeed be vain. Here let us die together."

"No, No!" he urged. "Fly, while yet you may. A moment and 'twill be too late!"

"Then let that moment pass!" came quick response. "Twere sweeter far to die with thee than live. And Michael, mark you not that foremost man, and the awful fury in his countenance? Hast not seen that face before? No Turk is he; but that vile Spaniard, de Gaul, whose hateful vengeance I could ne'er escape. Think you he would not pursue until I, of very weariness of flight would fall his easy prey? Wilt thou let me live to meet dishonor from that vile wretch?"

Nay, husband, nay. Be more merciful than that. Here strike the blow thyself and sweet 'twill be to taste death at thy dear hand. Then together our souls will fly from this cruel world to brighter realms above!' and speaking she bared her snow white breast and coaxed his dagger's plunge.

"He paused irresolute, his hand upon the hilt, and as he thus delayed, a voice of hatred which he knew full well broke forth with oaths and tauntings.

"How now, friend Michael! Did I not years gone by promise you ample vengeance for the buffet which robbed me of the embrace of her whom you cannot for longer detain from coming to my arms?"

"Enough. It shall be as thou doth wish, Izolda. Heaven forgive the blow, and may our spirits meet beyond. Farewell, heart's love!" and after one brief passionate embrace, raised his arm and plunged the blade deep into that gentle breast; then turning rushed to meet his foe and making fierce onslaught shouted between his blows.

"True. Vengeance is yours, Cardenio, but you shall not live to enjoy it. As that fairest soul of the Magyar race goes forth upon its passage to realms of bliss, thy blackened spirit shall likewise take its flight to regions of woe below!"

"In vain the Spaniard strove to parry. Thrust after thrust was fiercely made until one went home with such force, that it seemed that the hilt as well as blade must be driven through his body, and as he went down, a comrade riding up plunged his spear into the brave Comes' neck, and he, too, sank, a corpse.

"This, my lord, is the story of the Basaharcz, every word of which is most true; for I had it of my father, who in turn from his father's father, and the brave Tzigana, Andreas, who gave his life in hope to save the Comes and his lady, was my ancestor, whose name I bear."



